

WHITEMUD: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF SELF-IDENTIFYING MÉTIS EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry explores lived life experiences of two Métis educators and the role their culture had in their identity as teachers. The research wonders of this thesis asked the following questions: What role did the Métis culture have in shaping your identity? How does your cultural identity affect your role as a student, as a teacher, and as an administrator? What are some challenges did you face as Métis people in an educational context (as students, teachers, and administrators)?

Derived from individual semi-structured interviews ranging from 45 minutes to one hour, a narrative account of each teacher is presented and their storied lives are inquired into within the three dimensional inquiry space, defined to include the three commonplaces that are essential to narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this research, the participants shared their experiences while I analyzed their stories in the larger context of Métis identity and considered several strands: curriculum, relationality, poverty, and cleanliness. The strands arose from analysis of the conversations and are followed by discoveries and future implications in regards to Métis teacher identity. Discoveries include a need for the revitalization of the Michif language, immersion of Métis culture into the curriculum, and the uniqueness of the Métis culture. Future implications include a further investigation into the effects of anxiety and nervousness from colonization, as well as continued study of the Métis culture as it evolves moving forward.

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CHAPTER ONE

EMERGING FROM THE MUDDLE

Narrative Beginnings

It is the start of a new school year, teachers are busy prepping for their students. It is late August and the weather is beautiful. Summer is still on everyone's mind. The beginning of a school year is full of hope and optimism. We all know who the majority of our students will be, and we are confident it will be a great year for all. We are about to have a staff meeting in the school's library, and I have been asked to share our school's initiatives for First Nations and Métis education to the staff as there are several new teachers. I have been asked because I was our school's rep in the previous year, a role I have held since my first year here. This is not out of the ordinary, and I am happy to share in an area in which I have passion.

I am the only member of the staff with an Aboriginal background, I am Métis and the Métis are one of the three Aboriginal peoples as stated in the Canadian Constitution, although you might not realize that by my appearance. I have white skin with dark eyes and dark hair, just like my Métis mother. I am the First Nation and Métis Education rep for my school and my principal asked me to share our learning goals for the upcoming school year. I plan to share some of the literature I shared from the previous year, and I fully expect everyone to listen respectfully, nod their heads and react when appropriate, and my notion was correct until I reached a point when I began to share about the ethic of non-interference, and how this ethic could be applied in the classroom, not just with Aboriginal students but all students. Then it happens. Laughter. I hear a couple of teachers in the meeting laugh at the notion of non-interference. This does not upset me or surprise me, as it is always challenging to watch students make mistakes and not intervene, as it is our roles as teachers to help. I continue my

presentation as I would hope my students would do without acknowledging the laughter and share the remaining portion of my presentation.

It is not until later that I reflect on how my sharing went during that staff meeting. Yes, there was laughter, but they were not laughing at me, they were laughing at the idea that I shared is what I tell myself. The more I think about that moment, the more my feelings begin to change about what transpired earlier. They were comfortable to laugh because I am one of them. We are all teachers and everyone seems to have similar backgrounds. They know I will not take offence to them laughing at the ethic of non-interference¹, but I begin to wonder if there would have been laughter if I were visibly Aboriginal. These teachers who were laughing are people I enjoy working with and would never believe them to be malicious or wanting to cause harm. But, there was a hint of condescension that belittled and devalued what I was sharing. Since I appear to be white, it made it okay to laugh, otherwise there would have been silence and what I was sharing would have been disregarded soon afterwards, rather than what actually happened, which was laughing at the idea and disregarding it anyway. I felt like an insider and an outsider at the same time. This is not the first time I've experienced such situations, although this definitely ranks on the milder end on the spectrum for offensiveness. I have been dealing with these moments my whole life as a Métis man. I have always had difficulties with identity. I am not entirely sure what it means to be Métis. I wonder if other Métis educators have confronted these instances in their lives, and how did they respond?

Unpacking Experience: Métis Identity and Whiteness

Growing up with Métis heritage in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, always left me feeling confused. I never understood what it meant to be Métis. According to the 2011 Canadian Census, "Prince Albert

¹ The ethic of non interference is a behavioural norm of North American Native tribes that promotes positive interpersonal relations by discouraging coercion of any kind, be it physical, verbal, or psychological (Brant, 1990, p. 535).

has one of the highest Aboriginal population ratios for any Canadian city at 41.5%” (Stats Canada, 2011). Being a white-skinned Métis privileged me to not experience discrimination that most visibly Aboriginal people face in a colonial society. My appearance has also been privileged with my employment. I secured permanent employment rather easily compared to others who have similar training and background as me. I attribute this to being a white-looking male. My work colleagues may not be aware of my Aboriginal heritage, which sometimes causes tension and misunderstanding such as during my presentation. Some people make assumptions based on my seemingly white appearance and feel comfortable with expressing disparaging racist remarks around me or to me because of our seemingly similar appearances. This has caused me to be hyper aware of what I look like and who I am and what others assume by what they say. Because of where I grew up, and my appearance, I have always been confused as to what it means to be Métis. In my family being Métis meant a closeness amongst extended family and traditions around food and celebration. In Prince Albert, if you appear white, then you are treated as white. It was though there was an unspoken code that was understood by people who appear white, just as I am viewed and treated as any other teacher on staff. My whiteness was never questioned, but my Métis ancestry always raised eyebrows coupled with puzzled, suspicious looks. Frankenberg (1993) described whiteness:

First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p. 1)

My whiteness was never questioned by my work colleagues, and, assumptions are presumed, such as during my presentation when it was inferred that I would understand that applying the ethic of non-interference in the school would be humorous. It was not until I left my hometown that I could embrace my Métis roots without feeling fraudulent. It is not surprising that somebody with white skin, who claimed Métis ancestry, would be met with skepticism in Prince Albert. I felt the same tension growing

up in Prince Albert as I did during the presentation. The tension I faced was with denigrating comments or actions about Aboriginal people or ideas, but simultaneously being expected to understand the source and origin of the denigration. Because of my appearance, it is assumed that I can empathize with ignorance and intolerance towards Aboriginal people and culture. This sort of tension has stayed with me since I can remember. I have felt it for most of my life and I felt it during my presentation. White and Aboriginal relations are fragile in that community, as a result of the high number of Aboriginal inmates in the three correctional facilities located within city limits, coupled with attitudes filled with racism and prejudice (Canada, 2018). However, as I mentioned earlier, leaving my hometown allowed me to embrace my Métis heritage without feeling like an impostor.

I attended the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, where I was accepted in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). During this time, I found others with similar backgrounds to me and seemed to have experienced many of the same issues of identity that I had lived. SUNTEP creates a safe space for Métis identity to be acknowledged and celebrated and helps students to find the aspects of their identity that even they may not have lived because of the need in families to keep that quiet or buried. Even though I knew I was Métis, I had lived my entire life as identifiably white because of my appearance. University was the first place where I felt accepted as a Métis person, but I did not understand what being Métis entailed. I still question what it means to be Métis. It is equally challenging to be a Métis teacher. The decision to identify as Métis is not always easy, especially when I could pass as being white without question. To remain silent is to be complicit and to open yourself to opinions and viewpoints such as during the presentation. It is very easy to revert back to identifying as white when you are not immersed in an open and accepting environment, and even in an accepting environment I tend to allow myself to blend in. It is much easier to blend in and remain silent. It takes courage to announce yourself as different, but it is important to do so, as it may inspire

others to do the same, or enlighten people to new perspectives and understandings, which was the aim of my presentation. Powley (2003) stated a person's legal claim to Métis ancestry:

The verification of a claimant's membership in the relevant contemporary community is crucial, since individuals are only entitled to exercise Métis aboriginal rights by virtue of their ancestral connection to and current membership in a Métis community. Self-identification, ancestral connection, and community acceptance are factors which define Métis identity for the purpose of claiming Métis rights under section 35.

Upon reflection, I can recognize that the way my Métis mother raised my siblings and me was similar to how she was raised while growing up in a Métis community. I cannot explain what that means, but I know it is valid after witnessing how differently my Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends interacted with their families. There is a difference, however subtle it may be, and I intend to explore and understand what those subtleties are, and how Métis identity emerged in the lives of the participants. These differences were exemplified during my presentation to my staff. People existing in a Eurocentric world not being able to recognize or consider the value of a different worldview. One of the most significant instances when I recognized the large difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of living and knowing, and how I have used my white skin as a comfort blanket, was during my internship in a small prairie community. It was not the students, my cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, or the school itself that created these differences. It was the systems of power present within schools. Each component is actively involved in perpetuating these power structures. Everything felt foreign and daunting, as though I was relearning how to use my senses and reprogramming my instincts. Being in a school was not new or uncomfortable, but the values that this community believed and strived for, and were valued and taught in the school, were the root of the discomfort. I carry the discomfort and tension with me to this day. It was during the presentation that the discomfort was

crystalized, and I could articulate it with an actual instance rather than feeling the discomfort and not understanding it. This discomfort is what puzzles me. My wonder is about how have other Métis people experienced it and in what ways? I intend to investigate the lives of other self-identifying Métis educators in a narrative inquiry. Using narrative inquiry as a tool of exploration, I wonder how their experiences differed or resembled my own.

From my experience, self-identifying as Métis is more than filling in a box. It represents more than just being Aboriginal. White-skinned Métis people who self-identify open themselves to criticism that people of solely European ancestry or First Nations ancestry may not understand. There is skepticism from both sides of the equation. The Aboriginal community will question why a person who is able to “pass” would choose to acknowledge Aboriginal ancestry, which brings forth questions of authenticity (e.g., you are not actually Aboriginal). What does a person hope to gain by self-identifying? What are the reasons? On the other side of the spectrum is the non-Aboriginal community. There is mistrust and uneasiness when a person who appears white self-declares as Aboriginal. The uneasiness is what I encounter as a teacher. There are also questions of authenticity once again (e.g., you are one of the good ones or you are not like the others). Rather than feeling the intended pride or satisfaction in being the good role model of a perceived deficit lot, I consider these comments as leading to Métis people doubting themselves and experiencing feelings of guilt and shame. These feelings are reinforced and sustained because of instances such as my sharing with fellow staff members. These questions of identity have been puzzling me most of my life.

How can Métis people journey through the school system in healthy ways when they are unsure of themselves and may never be able to express their true being? The effects of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system are still felt by Aboriginal people, and this is may be a factor in the difficulties that Métis people encounter in schools today due to the historical trauma.

It is possible that constant verbal and nonverbal reminders of IRSs that might be present in the lives of IRS offspring could enhance the salience of their Aboriginal identity. Alternatively, it might reflect a process observed among other minority groups, in which outgroup rejection (in this case the knowledge that their group was the target of historical trauma, such as IRS, that focused on their assimilation), leads to greater identification with the ingroup. (Bombay et al., 2014, pp. 327-328)

As a teacher, I continue to find ways to improve the school experience for all students. Students should not feel unsure or afraid to be themselves in school. By learning about the experiences of the Métis people in this inquiry, I look to enhance the experience of Métis students. At the same time, this study of Métis storying their lived lives will aid in creating positive relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Investigating Identity of Métis Educators

This research will inquire into the storied lives and experiences of two people who identify as Métis, who have roles in education, and whose identities are a central part of their existence. I engaged two women with vast and varied life experiences. My interest in their stories and experiences as Métis educators was to hear and reflect on their stories, and, hopefully, be able to understand how they understood those experiences and navigated their lives, and how they navigated the encounters with racism and whiteness, together with the discomfort and tension like I did during my presentation to my coworkers.

Aboloson and Willett (2004) wrote, "Location of self in writing and research is integral to issues of accountability and the location from which we study, write and participate in knowledge creation" (p. 5). As a Métis, heterosexual, male growing up in Prince Albert, I had no trouble being socialized into life in Prince Albert. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) wrote that "Socialization refers to our systematic training

into the norms of our culture” (p. 15). Because of my white skin, I have never experienced outright racism, although I have been on the receiving end of people casually saying racist and degrading things about Aboriginal people, often out of nowhere. Since I look white, racists have felt safe to spout their vitriol, and because I have been socialized to this type of talk, I would often remain silent. My silence has led to tremendous feelings of guilt and rage. Guilt, because I would never say anything, and anger, because of what was being said, and the fact that I was seemingly complicit with their ignorant opinions. I could blend in and be accepted as a part white settler society. I am reminded of what Grande (2015) said about the disposition of Indigenous people, “Indigenous peoples have always been people of resistance, standing in defiance of the vapid emptiness of the bourgeois life” (p. 32). I cannot continue to be silent. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) detailed that “Ethnicity refers to people bound by a common language, culture, spiritual, tradition, and/or ancestry” (p. 23). I could use being Métis when it suited me, whether I was in the company of other Aboriginal people, or if it would benefit me in a financial way like going to school or getting a job. I learned to be white at the right time, and to be Métis at other times to avoid the discomfort and tension I experienced during the presentation to my colleagues. This plays into what Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) said in that there “are social, psychological, and material rewards for conformity, such as social acceptance, being treated as ‘normal,’ and career progression” (p. 18). I hope through listening and the telling and reliving of their stories, I can make better sense of my own experience, which could be valuable to other Métis, and non-Métis, people and educators. I hope, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2006), the telling, retelling, and possible reliving of the participants’ lived experience will have positive outcomes for the participants as well. I titled this project ‘Whitemud.’ Whitemud is a thought that occurred to me as I driving on the road of the same name in Edmonton. It struck me as powerfully visual. Mud is not usually associated with the colour white, just as I may not be perceived as being Métis based on my appearance. Mud is also a word with many

synonyms, and earth is what I immediately pondered. Earth is essential to life and comes in many shades and textures, which I connected to the experiences of all people.

Teachers have a responsibility to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to highlight differences to build stronger relationships rather than to use differences as a way to exclude and create barriers to coexistence.

Indigenous peoples represent a wide range of diversity as distinct peoples with definitive cultural and political affiliations within specific relations with their ecologies and regions, having distinctive languages and knowledges drawn from living in broad contexts throughout the world. (Bouvier, Battiste & Laughlin, 2016, p. 27)

I will interchangeably use the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous. Aboriginal refers to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups of Canada, while Indigenous is used to include groups from outside of Canada as well (Joseph, 2016). I found out what importance Métis identity plays in educational roles and everyday lives of the participants. I engaged in a telling narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) to explore this query, while recognizing Indigenous research and methodologies. In the next chapter, I will introduce the literature review on Métis teacher identity.

CHAPTER TWO

INVESTIGATING IDENTITIES OF MÉTIS EDUCATORS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Throughout the process of writing the proposal and conducting the research with participants, I considered literature on Métis identity with a focus on students and teachers and several themes began to arise. Lugones (1987) wrote of traveling “between worlds” which was highly revealing and helpful in describing the experiences of minority people living in a dominant society, and how people are perceived according to the worlds they inhabit. A person’s identity is shaped by many factors, including their relationships with others and the language or languages they speak. It is also shaped by place, such as the place they call home. The themes that were investigated not only pertained to teachers but to students as well. These themes include: Métis student identity and Métis teacher identity. That led me to the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model has an important tool for understanding the importance of one’s identity in achieving success in learning, through schools and life, and how these themes resonating in the model helped me to understand the experiences of the research participants in this study, and how they supported three commonplaces of sociality, temporality and place in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Another important theme of Métis identity is captured in the idea of the “Third Space” that was described by Richardson (2006), a Métis scholar who found Métis people required a space to be Métis. Where there is an understanding of a shared culture and history. I probed first into Lugones’s “world traveling” and then Richardson’s “Third Space” as theoretical frameworks that supported an understanding of identity from a Métis person’s point of view to help non-Métis people understand. It is relevant to acknowledge and explore Donald’s (2012) work in the area of Métissage as well. Dwayne Donald is a Métis educator and scholar whose identity explorations have helped Métis scholars understand their cultural place in Canadian history without the need to

assimilate. This review will describe the terms “world traveling” and “Third Space”, and how it is in relation to a narrative inquiry into the identity of Métis educators. It will delve into barriers found in different worlds and why there is a need for a “Third Space”, and how it affects Métis students. I also offer some consideration to the historical events that have influenced and fortified these barriers for Indigenous students.

Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Bouvier, Battiste, and Laughlin (2016) wrote, “Learning is experiential. Learning thus is connected to a lived experience and is reinforced by traditional ceremonies, spiritual meditation, storytelling, observation, and imitation” (p. 32). The model is meant to interpret lived experiences, and it was designed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people as a tool to measure success. “It encompassed what Indigenous communities viewed as success and it provided a balanced picture of strengths and weaknesses in a manner that was informative to counter-weight years of incomplete reporting and negative stereotypes” (Bouvier, Battiste & Laughlin, pp. 34-35). The use of the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (HLLM) will serve several purposes. Always being aware of the phenomenon under study, and returning to the life story of the participant for further understanding is key to an Indigenous research paradigm, as Kovach (2014) stated, “threaded throughout an Indigenous theoretical perspective is the value of personal knowledge and the practice of communicating what has been learned” (p. 102). Clandinin and Caine (2013) wrote of the importance of relationships in narrative inquiry for which I have generated such relationships in my inquiry and to which I will put my life story in relation to the life stories of the participants. Bouvier, Battiste and Laughlin (2016) also stated, “The models provide a concrete representation of how First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada understand the value and importance of learning and education, especially as they relate to their communities” (p. 28). As a Métis teacher inquiring into the lives of other Métis educators, the Métis

HLLM will aid in the inquiry. Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) wrote how the Canadian Council on Learning's Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (2007):

positions learners at the centre of communities that include schools. It contains a stylized graphic of a tree suggesting that the policies that sustain schools are living. From the stories shared by participants in interviews and in select survey respondents' substantive responses to our questions on promising practices in Métis student self-identification, it is clear to us that staff have to live in the Framework policy for it to be effective in schools. (pp. 27-28)

Positioning the learner is crucial in the model, and will be used in conjunction with the three narrative commonplaces to assist in understanding life experiences (Anuik & Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2014). The three models were initially created by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educators, leaders, and community members of those groups, funded by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) (Bouver, Battiste, & Laughlin, 2016). For the purposes of this thesis, I draw on the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model as a framework for designing questions for follow up meetings with the participants. The questions are based from the roots of the tree in the learning model and reflect self, people, and language and traditions. Métis scholar Yvonne Vizina (2010) wrote, " All components of the Model are believed to exert an influence in successful lifelong learning of Métis individuals" (pp. 19-20). Figure (2-1) on the following page is the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model taken from Canadian Council on Learning (2007):

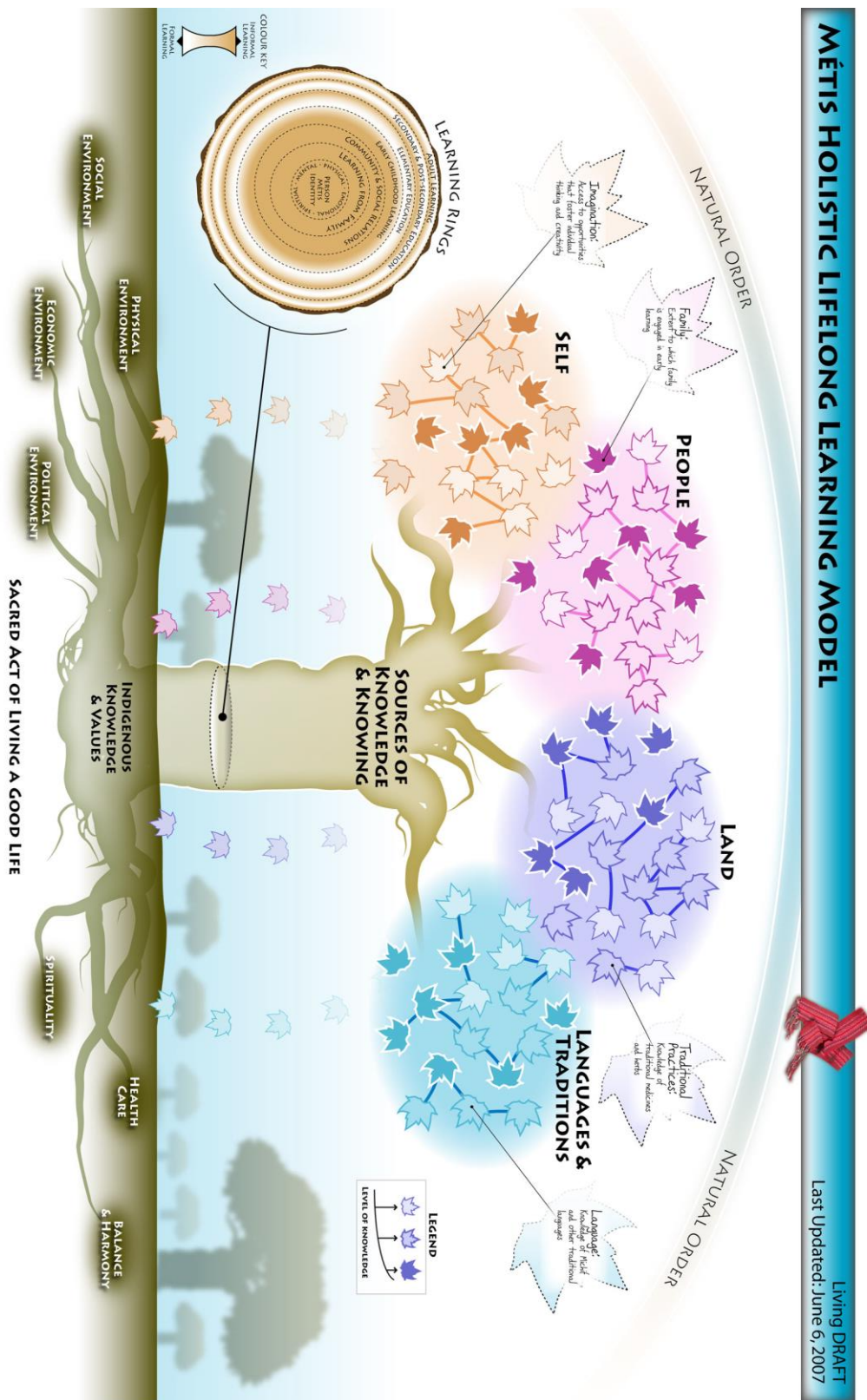


Figure 2-1. Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

World Traveling

Being a person with white skin has put me in positions where I am able to blend in with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. I can remain silent and allow my appearance to speak for itself when I'm with white, non-Aboriginal people, but I am also able to self-identity as Métis, which permits acceptance amongst other Aboriginal people. I am interested in how other Métis people have navigated their lives in this manner. Lugones (1987) wrote of people being able to travel between "worlds". "One can 'travel' between these 'worlds' and one can inhabit more than one of these 'worlds' at the very same time. I think that most of us who are perceived as outside the mainstream, for example, the U S dominant construction or organization of life are 'world travelers' as a matter of necessity and of survival" (Lugones, p. 11). Métis identity could be viewed in this manner of "world travelers". Lugones further explained, "For something to be a 'world' in my sense, it has to be inhabited at present by some flesh and blood people" (p. 9). Lugones added that:

A "world" in my sense may be an actual society given its dominant culture's description and construction of life, including a construction of the relationships of production of gender, race, etc. But a "world" can also be such a society given a non-dominant construction, or it can be such a society or a society given an idiosyncratic construction. As we will see it is problematic to say that these are all constructions of the same society. But they are different "worlds." (p. 10)

The "worlds" of Métis people as a racialized group is what I am interested in investigating. Lugones continued to explain that "Those of us who are 'world'-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them" (11). As a Métis man, and navigating my life in an almost chameleon-like fashion, I understand what Lugones was describing, and it relates to my experience. These chameleon-like transitions are what Lugones refers to as "traveling". Richardson (2006) described, "For the Métis, passing meant presenting oneself as either White or First Nations in order to escape being socially ostracized" (p. 61).

But Richardson also cautioned that “passing does not protect the individual from the internal wounds received by witnessing racism towards other Métis people, particularly other family members and loved ones” (p. 61). Lugones and Spelman (1983) wrote:

Another reason for not divorcing life from the telling of it or talking about it is that as humans our experiences are deeply influenced by what is said about them, by ourselves or powerful (as opposed to significant) others. Indeed, the phenomenon of internalized oppression is only possible because this is so: one experiences her life in terms of the impoverished and degrading concepts others have found it convenient to use to describe her. (pp. 573-574)

Lugones and Spelman were speaking of women, but the internal oppression is something I have felt as a Métis person. Growing up, I often heard racist and hateful ideas spouted about Aboriginal people. It put me in a unsafe? Tenuous? Difficult? position to remain silent or to open myself up to criticism and harm through confrontation. As a person who is able to ‘pass’ in different worlds, there is a certain amount of ease and familiarity that could force a person to remain in one ‘world’ and not want to travel to get to know other worlds. ‘Passing’ will be detailed further in this review. Lugones stated that “I take the maximal way of being at ease to be somewhat dangerous because it tends to produce people who have no inclination to travel across ‘worlds’ or have no experience of ‘world’ traveling” (p. 12). Lugones also spoke of ‘playfulness’ where a person is able to be in a world where they are at ease and are able to be themselves. ‘World traveling’ and getting to know the lives of people different from oneself and finding relationships are important in the narrative inquiry process. Through this literature review, I researched a world for Métis people where they are free to be fully themselves, playful and are not constructed as unplayful. Playful and unplayful refer to how people might be, their behaviour, in the worlds in which people inhabit and how they are perceived and treated. A person may be playful in a world where they feel safe and accepted, while being unplayful refers to worlds in which a person must be serious and

may not be able or feel safe to freely express themselves. Métis teachers travel between worlds by being a presence in schools, as deliverers of curriculum and representatives of their culture.

The Third Space

The 'Third Space' is a place for Métis people in between the worlds they inhabit, the worlds in which Lugones (1987) described earlier. Lowan (2011), quoting Richardson (2004), also wrote, "The Third Space is a place where Western, Aboriginal and other cultural beliefs, philosophies, values and knowledge intersect, cohabit and intermingle (p. 10). The need for a Third Space is crucial for Métis people because Richardson (2006) discovered that "Skin has been problematic for many Métis people because it has confounded their attempts to protect themselves from racism and hide their aboriginal origins" (p. 61). St. Denis (2007) also wrote of the importance of skin colour: "Aboriginal teachers, both Métis and First Nations, repeatedly spoke to the reality that skin colour does matter in terms of how they were received" (p. 1081). St. Denis added that:

if passing as white is an option for some Aboriginal people, then passing can become an expedient option. But choosing to pass has its own consequences, one of which may include denying that racism is a problem as one way to achieve acceptance. (p. 1082)

This third space is a two-sided problem as Richardson maintained further that "Métis people have experienced another aspect of this dynamic, where they are rejected in First Nations communities for being 'too White' or 'Wannabe Indians'" (p. 61). This type of situation is also referred to by Richardson as a "double bind". The Third Space is a place where Métis do not need to "pass" or need to prove their Indigeneity.

A third space offers a place where hybridity, or being mixed-race, can be experienced holistically and celebrated as central to Métis culture. A third space offers an escape from Cartesian duality

and polarized thinking, from being stuck between being a White person with some Indian blood or a Native person with some white ancestors. (Richardson, 2006, p. 66)

Creating a third space will give Métis people a place to be playful and at ease, where they can discuss Métis things as Métis people. Lowan-Trudeau (2014) wrote of the Third Space mentality as, “amenability to incorporating two or more cultures, languages, and traditions on individual, community, and regional levels” (p. 353).

The tactics discussed by the research participants in my study coalesce around the theme of creating a third space where Métis-ness, Métis community and Métis knowledge can be shared. In this Métis space, history can be retold from a Métis perspective; a Métis-centered analysis can be refined. (Richardson, 2006, p. 63)

The third space is the name given to this “Métis” world, and the next section will describe the work being conducted in this world.

Métissage

When writing about Métis identity and the third space, it is critical to acknowledge and make reference to the work Métis educator Dwayne Donald (2012) has done in the area of Métissage. Donald theorized from what he perceived as a needed space for Métis people and their history:

We need more complex understandings of human rationality that traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present by demonstrating that perceived civilizational frontiers are actually permeable and that key perspectives on history, memory, and experience are connected and inferential. The key challenge is to find a way to hold these understandings in tension without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate. (p. 534)

A requirement for understanding others is recognizing their journey. It is about finding relation when there does not necessarily appear to be any. Dussel (1993) wrote about a “trans-modernity, in which

both modernity and its negated alterity (victims) co-realize themselves in a process of mutual creative fertilization” (p.76). Finding relation through differences, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo (2009) revealed Métissage as:

... a counternarrative to the grand narrative of our times, a site for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts, and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical praxis... We braid strands of place and space, memory and history, ancestry and (mixed) race, language and literacy, familiar and strange, with strands of tradition, ambiguity, becoming, (re)creation, and renewal into a Métissage. (p. 8)

Donald described, “Ethical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 535). Métis people embrace the differences of their dueling cultural ancestors. It is only through adopting the differences of First Nations and European that a Métis identity has developed. Higgins (2014) described work in the area of Métissage, “work towards relational Indigenous ways-of-knowing-in-being while simultaneously working against Eurocentric segmentation and categorisation” (p. 216). Métissage then is both a theoretical concept and a practice (Zuss, 1997). Donald noted, “...ethical relationality should not be interpreted as a universalized philosophy emphasizing ‘sameness’” (p. 535). It is not about creating a monoculture where the uniqueness of a person’s history and belief systems are swallowed by the dominant colonizing culture.

This concept of relationality instantiates an ethical imperative to acknowledge and honour the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences position

us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people in the world are tied together. (p. 536)

For the purpose of research, such as narrative inquiry which was used to conduct this research, “Métissage, as research praxis, is about relationality and the desire to treat texts – and lives – as relational and braided together rather than isolated and independent” (p. 537). Métissage is shedding light on Aboriginal stories and lives:

A central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to bring Aboriginal place-stories to bear on public policy discussions in educational contexts in appropriate and meaningful ways. Such place-stories encourage people to rethink and reframe their received understanding of the place now called Canada and thus better comprehend the significance of Aboriginal presence and participation today. (Donald, 2012, p. 542)

Indigenous Métissage as a theory is about resistance and challenging colonialism and oppression. Worley (2006) stated, “Métissage emerges as a sheltering place that facilitates individuals’ and community’s self-strengthening and self-emancipation” (p. 520). It is a “way to plan, conceptualize, strategize, and make cogent various forms of resistance to the logic of colonialism” (p. 543), but do not categorize or limit it because “Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method” (p. 544). Donald asserted, “A central aim of Indigenous Métissage is to reconstruct understandings of the colonial constructs of people” (p. 545). Through the reconstruction and understanding of colonial constructs and competing constructs, systems of power are revealed. Donald (2012) reiterated:

the hermeneutic that informs Indigenous Métissage is very much affiliated with the desire to acknowledge and address the complex difficulties that characterize Aboriginal and Canadian

relations. One of the more salient difficulties of this work is the possibility for the recognition of difference while simultaneously emphasizing ethical relationality. (p. 548)

Métissage is a critical approach to understanding relations between Aboriginals and Canadians of non-Aboriginal ancestry, while recognizing differences and accepting one another in the spirit of ethical relationality. Basso (1972) wrote, "...behavior cannot be assumed to have unlimited, or pan-situational, applicability" (p.32). It is a practice for minority groups to transcend their usual place to achieve equality while maintaining the uniqueness of their cultures.

Métis Identity in Schools

This section on Métis identity in schools will first explore identity formation and then delve into Métis student identity, followed by Métis teacher identity.

Identity formation. The focus of this narrative inquiry is the life experience of Métis educators, and what role their Métis identity has played in their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) referred to the multiplicity of stories that shaped a person's identity in a narrative inquiry as "stories to live by" (p. 28). Reid and Santoro (2006) wrote of the relational nature of identity formation:

Gee (1995) and Wenger (1998) use the notion of a discourse community, or community of practice, to suggest that we can also think of identity as social practice. Their work suggests that identity is never fixed but is always being produced, changed and shifted with changing circumstances. Such poststructuralist accounts of human subjectivity are important because of their emphasis on the idea that people learn who they are in social practice, and that identity formation is not an individual process or a private activity, but that like all learning, identity formation is social – built up over time, in and through relationships with others. (p. 146)

Our identity is shaped by those we interact with, and within a Métis community, Métis identity is developed by people in relation. "Identity is a narrative process and product that is a communal act"

(Lewis, 2017, p. 115). This could create issues for Métis people who are living between Aboriginal and mainstream Canadian worlds. The need for “passing” becomes a concern because as Donald (2012) explained:

My particular problem, in terms of identity and belonging, is that I have been led to believe that I cannot live my life as though I am both an Aboriginal person and the grandson of European settlers. As citizen and aspiring academic, there has been considerable pressure to choose sides, to choose a life inside or outside the walls of the fort. (p. 534)

It is difficult to find a space for Métis identity formation to occur which highlights the need for a “third space”.

Métis student identity in schools. Métis students occupy a unique space in schools. They may often ‘pass’ as non-Aboriginal mainstream, but if they choose not to, or cannot pass, then there are questions of authenticity. The binary between white and non-white students is very complex because of shared history and mixed relationships that affect a person’s appearance. Battiste (2013) wrote “Indigenous students have been part of a forced assimilation plan” (p. 23). Métis students may also be children of Residential Schools survivors, so there are the lingering effects stemming from the trauma faced by the survivors. The effects that linger are a mistrust and a negative perspective of the education system.

Passing. “World traveling” and “passing” are almost unavoidable for Métis students in schools which leaves Métis students unsure of their identity and how significant the role heritage occupies in their life. “There is still a lot of confusion about what it means to be Métis and, therefore, promising practices on representation of Métis in curricula and in class require attention” (Anuik & Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2014, p. 30). It is challenging to represent Métis in curricula when there is confusion about what

it means to be Métis, especially when skin colour and biological features of racialization are often white signifiers of Indigenous identity.

Discourses that predetermine Aboriginality based on physical appearance, behaviour and lived experience commonly position Aboriginal people in static essentialised categories that limit their subjectivity. Further, these discourses work to identify specific ways of looking, being and acting in which the body is articulated as a racial truth (Ehlers, 2008, 444). Often expressed as not being a 'real' Aboriginal person in the absence of certain preconceived criteria, this discourse can be used by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to secure an expedient position within power relationships. (Burgess, 2017, p. 742)

Physical appearance plays a critical role for Métis students. Those who are able to 'pass' are perceived differently in the classroom from those who appear visibly or racially Aboriginal. This distinction is solely to create power relationships and division amongst Aboriginal people. Madden (2017) echoed this sentiment that a Eurocentric knowledge creates binaries in a hierarchal form, "Each imaginary binary is presented as though it were 'real' and assigned a particular essence, typically in a manner that privileges the first term over the second" (p. 652). Being Métis is in opposition of binary systems, which, in turn, challenges and negates issues of authenticity.

Authenticity. Creating binaries emphasizes differences to establish an imbalance of power. "This discourse event underscores an association between privilege and race-based notions of 'authenticity' that has the potential to shape Aboriginal education in schools in problematic ways" (Madden, 2017, p. 653). Madden suggested that "Viewing Aboriginal students as 'authentic' regardless of their perceived race or adherence to what is sometimes referred to as a traditional life, invites teachers to think about Aboriginal peoples and cultures as diverse, hybrid, complex, and indeterminate" (p. 653). Appearance cannot be the only determinant of identity as Richardson (2006) maintained, "Métis identity is created

through a process of social interaction and dialogic relationships between the inner world and the external world” (p. 57). A way to bridge the gap between the inner and outer world is the need for Métis students to self-declare without fear or pressure.

Self-declaring and barriers. Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) suggested, “There seems to be recognition by school boards that Métis learners and their parents, families, and communities must see themselves reflected in school buildings if they are to feel comfortable self-identifying” (p. 3). Self-declaring could allow more Métis students to be aware of each other, which in turn might create the conditions for a “third space” to appear. There are also possible academic benefits of self-declaring which Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns added, “It is true that the self-identification directive is the touchstone to determine programs and support for Aboriginal youth and signals the need for development of curriculum in concert with community stakeholders, specifically, Aboriginal Advisory Councils” (p. 3). Although, there needs to be caution when encouraging for self-identification by Métis people because “self-identification may be construed as another means of subjectifying Aboriginal populations by regulating and measuring their outcomes” (Cherubini, 2011, p. 11). Self-declaring is a very fine line that must be balanced with care, love, respect and understanding. Anuik and Bellehumeur (2014) stated that schools in Ontario are not places of acceptance for Aboriginal people because of a disregard of traditional knowledge and having not earned the trust of Aboriginal people. This lack of trust is not a recent occurrence. The residential school system’s negative role in the education of Aboriginal students today cannot be understated.

Residential school effects. The residential school system destroyed Aboriginal students’ identity and caused future trepidation in Aboriginal students when choosing to self-identify. This has created issues of identity. St. Denis (2007) wrote:

The experience of residential school education has also had a huge impact on Aboriginal identity and belonging. The primarily negative effects of the mandatory requirement that First Nations children attend residential school have been well documented (Sellars, 1993). Among the many devastating effects was the alienation of Aboriginal family members from one another, and the widespread, deliberate, and for the most part, successful erasure and slaying of Aboriginal languages. (p. 1073)

Lewis (2017) further explained, “From centuries long colonisation emerges the politics of identity that are fraught with the ongoing legacy of colonisation’s aims of assimilation and erasure of Indigenous people” (p. 117). Residential Schools were a key tool for colonisation and assimilation. St. Denis (2007) explained the effects of racialization:

All these practices of racialization and racism have had devastating effects on Aboriginal people. The historical legacy of the Indian Act and residential schools continues to impact Aboriginal peoples’ sense of community and belonging. Through these historical processes, so many were and, some would argue, continue to be relegated to the margins of the margins. (p. 1073)

The residential school system created conditions for future generations of Aboriginal students to be untrusting of the current education system, and as a result, students are cautious to self-identify and claim their Aboriginal ancestry, which in turn has a potentially devastating effect on the quality of their education. Through a denial of additional funds that could increase support and services for Aboriginal students.

Métis teacher identity in schools. Métis teachers also occupy a unique standpoint within schools. There are feelings of being an “insider” and an “outsider” that go along with “world traveling” when being an Aboriginal person in a colonial space. Ideas and discourses projected onto Métis teachers include an over-determination of Aboriginality where they are expected to be the ‘go’person’ or experts

in culture and relations. This leads to schools viewing Métis teachers as solely Indigenous without being a teacher. These discourses neutralize the strengths that Aboriginal teachers add to schools.

Insiders and outsiders. The identity of Métis teachers is one of traveling "worlds" and having to adjust and adapt who they are depending on the space they occupy in any given world.

This identity is constructed through particular group memberships, social networks and shared historical stories embedded in social institutions which are useful in considering how explicit and tacit group membership rules maintain behaviour and standards necessary to continue as a member or insider (144). This illuminates how Aboriginal teachers can simultaneously be insiders and outsiders in socio-cultural contexts such as schools and communities. (Burgess, 2017, p. 741)

Métis teachers occupy different places and travel in different "worlds" which position them as insiders and outsiders. Métis teachers who can "pass", but choose not to, will be positioned as "Aboriginal teachers". Being viewed as an "Aboriginal" teacher comes with unsuspecting expectations.

Over-determination of Aboriginality. Aboriginal teachers may be exploited by their simply being Aboriginal and are filling a diversity role for the school system where their identities are not accepted or valued in their roles as teachers. These racialized roles have become simply categories of equity or diversity, terms of convenience that must be challenged and questioned at all times because they are habitually reinforced (Ehlers, 2008). While diversity, indigenization or equity bring in teachers with multiple identities, Aboriginal teachers have additional qualities often sought. Burgess (2017) wrote of the over-determination of Aboriginality:

The notion that Aboriginal teachers best understand Aboriginal students because of assumed biographical similarities often creates subject positions for minority teachers (Mahrouse 2005) that become discursive truths. These truths operate in any given contextual and relational site

and are embedded in complex and contradictory power relationships that potentially undermine and destabilise subjectivities and social relationships. (Burgess, 2017, p. 742)

Aboriginal teachers are more often seen as racialized figureheads, filling an Aboriginal program need added to the school, as though the school fulfilled the objective for diversity and was able to put a check beside “Aboriginal Teacher” box on a checklist. In some instances, they are recruited to be the sacred keepers of ancient knowledge that is only accessible from and to an Aboriginal person. It is also important to remember that Indigenous knowledge shared in schools has been filtered through non-Indigenous purposes and ways of knowing and its accompanying discourses (Nakata, 2007). The expectations thus placed on Aboriginal teachers are sometimes unrealistic for this reason. Mahrouse (2005) described the difficulty and benefits of the discourses surrounding the role that minority teachers occupy. These discourses included the racism that minority teachers face, the school’s benefits for having minority teachers, and the lack of equal employment opportunities they hold. Mahrouse indicated the role that these discourses place on racializing minority teachers and reinforcing negative stereotypes. They are expected to be experts in matters where it is not possible to be an expert. No teacher can truly understand the life experience of each one of their students, but Aboriginal teachers are somehow expected to connect with and understand each Aboriginal student, which is unfeasible. Reid and Santoro (2006) supported this idea:

Indigenous teachers are often expected to fill the gaps in knowledge of White teachers
Indigenous education and issues. This has the effect of absolving White teachers from the
responsibility to be part of the solution to problems of Indigenous Education. (p. 151)

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers have the same responsibility to all students regardless of their backgrounds. Every teacher has the same duty of educating all students.

“Indigenous” but not a teacher. Aboriginal teachers may be put into positions as role models, counsellors or administrators of programming established for Indigenous students whose only purpose is to represent an Aboriginal presence in schools but little more.

Indigenous teachers are often positioned as serving the needs of the school, and asked to ameliorate difficult relationships between Indigenous homes and school, this work is often understood as a necessary peripheral to the real business of teaching children official curriculum. This can often lead to Indigenous teachers being seen primarily or, at worst only, as Indigenous, rather than as teachers, and therefore concerned exclusively with the needs of Indigenous students and Indigenous issues in the school. (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 152)

This creates the stereotype of the "good Aboriginal teacher" which limits them to certain roles and devalues their professional and cultural identity. This stereotype disables Métis teachers in their role as educators, but the “good Aboriginal teacher” could have a huge impact in schools.

The “good Aboriginal teacher” and its important role. Burgess (2017) explained, "The ‘good Aboriginal teacher’ enhances the school’s cultural diversity, addresses poor Aboriginal student outcomes, and engages with the local Aboriginal community, thus demonstrating the school’s good intent and support for Reconciliation" (p. 742). Aboriginal teachers should not be limited by their identity, which mutes their experiences and potential. Burgess explained that “...the importance of individual narratives in offering opportunities to articulate choices about identity and subjectivity, rather than feeling constrained by normalised and totalising expectations and assumptions about Aboriginal teachers” (p. 745). The damaging costs of ignoring and restraining Aboriginal teacher identity is not only harmful to Aboriginal teachers but to all students and all communities as well. Aboriginal teachers must find the overlap in the balance between mainstream ways of learning and Aboriginal ways of learning (Yunkaporta, 2009). St. Denis (2007) articulated the importance of Aboriginal teachers in schools, “There

is a need to promote a commitment to multicultural, anti-racist, and pro-justice practices with non-minorities who are often in influential administrative positions (Quiocho)" (pp. 1086-87). Silencing Aboriginal teachers and pigeonholing them into one-dimensional roles negatively affects their identity, which limits their ability to affect positive change.

Conclusion

This literature review explored the identity of Métis people in schools. The review shared and explained the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. This was explored through Lugones (1987) writings on "World Traveling" and continued on to Richardson's (2006) work in the area of the "Third Space". Next, Donald's (2012) extensive research in the concept of Métissage, which led to Métis student and teacher identity in schools. The scope of the Métis student identity section included "passing", authenticity, self-declaring, and barriers associated with it, and the effects residential schools have had on Métis student identity. The final section explored was Métis teacher identity which included sections on being an insider and an outsider, the over-determination of Aboriginality, being viewed as solely as "Aboriginal" and not as a teacher, the "good Aboriginal teacher", and the importance of the not limiting Aboriginal teacher identity. The reviewed literature has revealed a need for special considerations and spaces for Métis students and teachers. Ideas to consider are not labeling students and teachers in binary-only terms, having Métis identity reflected in schools, understanding that each life and narrative is unique, and the effects of historical policies that are felt in the present. Schools must create and allow spaces for Métis people (students, teachers and families) to be who they are without pressure or worry. Métis people must see themselves reflected in the schools, and Métis teachers must not be held back in one-dimensional roles. The next chapter will the methodology this was used for this project.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF MÉTIS EDUCATORS: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research was a narrative inquiry into the life experiences of Métis educators. This section will delve into twelve touchstones in becoming narrative inquirers that also reflect “the importance of methodological and relational commitments” (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 177). Before exploring the touchstones, I acknowledge and recognize Indigenous research, and how this narrative inquiry was an appropriate methodology for conducting Indigenous research. Then I will proceed by explaining a Deweyan ontology of experience, which was foundational to this narrative inquiry.

Indigenous Research

This narrative inquiry was explored by me, a Métis man, and it expands and adds depth to the breadth of Indigenous research. Kovach (2009) described, “A product resulting from research using a tribal-centred Indigenous methodology ought to have a strong narrative component as part of its method and presentation of findings” (p. 35). Kovach also wrote “if Indigenous methods (story, protocol) are being utilized, an Indigenous research framework with a tribal epistemology ought to be recognized, as opposed to assuming that Indigenous methods can be subsumed under a Western way of knowing” (p. 35). This inquiry qualifies as Indigenous research. In approaching and building relationships with the proposed participants, I follow the Elder Protocol and Guidelines that was developed by the Council of Aboriginal Initiatives (2012) at the University of Alberta. I chose these protocols and guidelines, as they are concise and clear, because they were designed within the traditional homeland of the Métis (Métis Nation of Canada, n.d.). Also, as Kovach (2009) explained, “There is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally” (p. 37). I was born and raised in the traditional homeland of the Métis, which is crucial to Indigenous methodologies as Kovach relayed

that “When considering Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous people contextualize to their tribal affiliation, we do this because our knowledges are bound to place” (p. 37). This was a narrative inquiry, but my framework is rooted in Indigenous identities and experience, as Kovach further detailed “An Indigenous framework acts as a nest, encompassing the range of qualities influencing the process and content of the research journey” (p. 42). The narrative inquiry methodology is compatible within an Indigenous framework.

Indigenous research frameworks shift the power of the researcher in controlling the research process and outcome. Methodologically this means gathering knowledge that allows for voice and representational involvement in interpreting findings. A powerful method for achieving this desire is the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences in their terms. (Kovach, 2009, p. 82)

Allowing for voice and representational involvement was crucial in this narrative inquiry, especially considering that “Narrative inquiry as a methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Narrative inquiry is also applicable for Indigenous research because Kovach (2014) wrote, “The practice and protocol of self-situating with the purpose of acknowledging those who have held us up is increasingly found within research and scholarship by Indigenous authors” (p. 103). Self-locating yourself, in relation with the research participants, is fundamental to both narrative inquiry and Indigenous research.

This narrative inquiry added and expanded the scope and depth of Indigenous research because, with narrative inquiry, each life study is unique. Every participant’s experience and lived life is different and unlike any other study. The focus of self-identifying Métis educators, through a narrative inquiry, deepened understandings and increased knowledge of the lived lives involving Indigenous experience and Métis identity and culture. It was beneficial for the investigator and participants, who are

Indigenous, as well. Kovach (2009) stated, “Phenomenology and narrative inquiry have been useful methodologies for Indigenous researchers who wish to make meaning from story” (p. 27). My meaning making from life stories of Métis and of my own enhanced the knowledge base of Indigenous research, Indigenous experiences and understandings. Kovach (2016) also stated, “Within qualitative research, Indigenous research can include community-based, ethnographic, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, decolonizing, and Indigenous methodologies” (p. 215). The importance of community to Indigenous research emphasises the importance that an individual’s experience has on others. Each individual’s experience influences, adds to, and enhances their community. Dewey (2015) wrote that “the principle continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some ways the quality of those which come after” (p. 35). A study of experience as phenomena into the lives of Indigenous people will positively affect and enrich Indigenous research as a whole, while accessing the past to better the future.

Deweyan Ontology of Experience

Narrative inquirers adhere to a Deweyan ontology of experience. Huber et al. (2013) stated, “For Dewey, education, life, and experience are one and the same. Education is life and life is education, and to study life, to study education, is to study experience” (p. 220). The study of experience is a key component of narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explained:

...the narrative inquirer focuses on the way the relational, temporal, and continuous features of a pragmatic ontology of experience can manifest in narrative form, not just in retrospective representations of human experience but also in the lived immediacy of that experience. (p. 44)

Three features of a Deweyan ontology of experience are appropriate for narrative research. Clandinin and Murphy (2009) described an “emphasis on the social dimension of inquiry, temporality of knowledge generation, and continuity that is not merely perceptual but ontological” (p. 599). Life is

always developing and changing; there needs to be a look to the past to understand a person's experience, while knowing that a life is always evolving. Clandinin and Caine (2013) explained Dewey's Theory of Experience's connection to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, "Dewey's two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity enacted in situations, provide grounding for attending to a narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality" (p. 168). Dewey's criteria of experience is foundational for narrative inquirers to abide by the methodological and relational commitments as described by Clandinin and Caine.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an effective methodology to study the experience of the participant.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) wrote:

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

Using narrative inquiry, not only did I learn about the participants' past, but I also learned about how their experiences have shaped the people they are today. I spoke with two Métis professional teachers, who were like elders to me, with expansive experiences in culture and education because:

...the central role that Elders play in the promotion of lifelong learning, passing on the importance of responsibility and relationships within family and community life, reinforcing intergenerational connection, a strong relationship to place (a physical, spiritual-emotional, geographic space) and strong identities as human beings. (Bouvier, Battiste & Laughlin, 2016, p. 33)

The focus that narrative inquiry places on experience suited the wonder that I explored, which is the experience of Métis educators with vast experiences and knowledges. The participants' life experience and their insight of Métis culture, identity, and educational settings played an important role in the promotion of lifelong learning. "As a culturally and textually appropriate approach (Chase 2000; Clandinin 2007; Lyons & LaBoskey 2002), narrative inquiry can displace dominant discourse, allowing marginalised narratives to be positioned more prominently in contemporary conceptualisations of culture'" (Burgess, 2017, p. 739). It also resisted a singular discourse, the one narrative of Métis people illustrating multiplicities of perspectives within and among Métis. Through this narrative inquiry, the life experience of Métis educators further displaced dominant discourses of Aboriginal peoples in schools.

In this narrative inquiry, there were twelve touchstones as described for narrative inquirers by Clandinin and Caine (2013) that I recognized as core to my study. Clandinin and Caine wrote:

While we have chosen to name twelve, there might be others, but for now these seem to be key and we anticipate that they will remain key for some time. The touchstones we selected reflect our becoming narrative inquirers, and also the importance of methodological and relational commitments" (p. 177).

The importance of methodological and relational commitments were addressed in this inquiry through the navigation of the twelve touchstones.

Touchstones

The touchstones were critical in planning and beginning this narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Caine (2013) detailed twelve touchstones, and here was my process for each of them.

1. Relational Responsibilities

Narrative inquiry as methodology depends on a relationship generated between participant and researcher. The relationship builds to a place of mutual respect and understanding where there is an openness and comfort in sharing. Clandinin and Caine (2013) described this touchstone, “It is important to understand narrative inquiry spaces as spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants; spaces that are always marked by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (p. 169). Through relational commitments, participant and researcher can feel safe, accepted, and vulnerable. As both the researcher and the participant are Métis educators, the researcher was conscious to keep out questions of judgment or offer any in this narrative inquiry space because that would have been detrimental to the relationship. Because of the open and caring environment generated in both cases of the participants, it was possible to address issues and ideas larger than just the experiences of the researcher and participant. Clandinin and Caine explained, “As we attend to our relational responsibilities, we attend to issues of equity and social justice, which inform the significance of our work” (p. 169). The significance of the work was discovered through the ethical understandings found in the narrative inquiry space. Clandinin and Caine stated, “Ethical understandings in narrative inquiry are marked by living in relational spaces that bring forth researchers’ and participants’ lived ethical understandings, complexities, and tensions” (p. 169). The unlikeness of each participants’ experience was also considered and reinforced the need for relational responsibilities. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) wrote:

In narrative inquiry, inquirers must deepen the sense of what it means to live in relation in an ethical way.... Ethical considerations permeate narrative inquiries from start to finish: at the

outset as ends-in-view are imagined; as inquirer-participant relationships unfold, and as participants are represented in research texts. (p. 483)

The relational responsibilities were integral for the duration of the inquiry. The relational commitments were important to the narrative inquiry process. Riley and Hawe (2005) noted, "Narrative analysis requires an in-depth engagement with and understanding of the participant's experience" (p. 234). By adhering to strong relational commitments, we as researcher and participant gained a deeper understanding. Murphy, Pinnegar, and Pinnegar (2011) also stated, "One of the ways that narratives gain power is when we lay them alongside each other so that the interruptions enrich and open their meaning" (p. 106). Living in relation as Métis and as educators committed to improving our own and student experiences created a relational ethics that strengthened and deepened the inquiry findings.

2. In the Midst

Lives are always changing and evolving. Clandinin and Caine (2013) explained that "Narrative inquirers always enter into research relationships in the midst" (p. 169). They further asserted researchers must be aware that "participants are always in the midst of their lives and their lives are shaped by attending to past, present, and unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives" (p. 170). The need to follow relational commitments and be aware of living in the midst is echoed by Huber et al. (2013):

...narrative inquiry resides in the relationship of researcher and participant(s) who may also become co-researchers as the relationship evolves. It is through relationship that the co-composing of new lives for both becomes possible. Experience as in continual motion and as in continuous co-composition, which shaped narrative inquiry terms such as "being in the midst." (pp. 220-221)

As a researcher, I noted that inquiring into the experience of the participants changed from one meeting to the next. In narrative inquiry, a person is always in transition, and narrative inquirers are cognizant of this. According to Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) explain, "In narrative inquiry it is important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition" (p. 23). The transitions of the participants' experience is captured in their narratives. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) wrote, "It is through story that people are able to understand, make meaning of, and relate experiences, because story is how people make sense of their existence" (p. 576). A narrative captured living in the midst by using story to relate experiences.

3. Negotiation of Relationships

During this narrative inquiry, there was continued communication between researcher and participant to ensure that relational commitments were adhered. This communication served to move the inquiry process forward. Clandinin and Caine (2013) said "Negotiations of purpose, transitions, intentions, and texts are ongoing processes throughout the inquiry. Narrative inquirers also negotiate ways they can be helpful to participant(s) both in, and following, the research" (p. 170). Negotiation infers a level of equal participation and determination of the outcome. I was in relation with the participants by building and maintaining a relationship throughout the inquiry. The relationship was maintained before, during, and after the inquiry. I considered and negotiated with each participant during the entire process.

4. Narrative Beginnings

I began my narrative by sharing a moment during a staff meeting at my school and that is what sprouted my wonder. This caused me to reflect on past experiences and forced me to ponder if people in similar circumstances had the same kind of experiences. "Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry" (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 171). I have reflected on

my past and present situation, and I continued to reflect moving forward throughout the inquiry. Through careful reflection and consideration, the uniqueness of the inquiry became clearer. Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) told “the need to name the phenomenon, the ‘what’ we are inquiring into”(p. 25). From my narrative beginning, I wondered about the experiences of Métis educators.

5. Negotiating Entry to the Field

By following relational commitments, researcher and participant negotiated a relational space that allowed the inquiry to occur. Clandinin and Caine (2013) wrote, “We negotiate with participants an ongoing relational inquiry space. This relational space is what we most commonly call the field” (p. 171). Clandinin et al. (2010) explained, “Narrative inquiry is the study of people in relation studying the experience of people in relation” (p. 82). I spoke to participants in person, and heard and recorded their experiences. I had the awareness that “In narrative inquiry, it is important that the researcher listen first to the practitioners’ story, and that it is the practitioner who first tells his or her story” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Clandinin and Caine (2013) added “The most frequently used starting point is with telling stories and the methods most commonly used are conversations, or interviews as conversations” (p. 171). Part of the negotiations is explained by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007), “We suggest that when using narrative inquiry it is important that the researcher is not only able to ask questions that elicit stories but also that she/he is able to position her/himself so that stories can be analysed effectively” (p. 463). Negotiations created a space where researcher and participant were free and encouraged to share in an honest and open way. This honest and open space was called the field.

6. Moving From Field to Field Texts

Field texts (data) were collected in the field. Clandinin and Caine (2013) said, “Field texts, commonly called data, are composed from conversations, interviews, participant, observations, as well as artifacts” (p. 172). I conducted interviews with the participants. The field notes encompassed thoughts leading to the interview, they also contained reflections during and after the interview.

Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) explained, “thinking about methods also means figuring out and describing the kind of field texts (narrative inquirers’ term for data) we need to collect and compose” (p. 27). Recorded spoken word transcripts were collected. Following the recorded transcripts, I completed field notes which aided in the creation of field texts. I met three times with each participant for about an hour and gathered field notes to create field texts. Field notes were used and shared with the participant and aided in the process of creating field texts. The field notes also animated and enhanced the audio recordings.

7. Moving From Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

The field texts used to negotiate and communicate with the participant in the creation of research texts. Clandinin and Caine (2013) said:

Narrative inquirers continue to live in relational ways with participants throughout the process of making their findings public. This means that field, interim, and final research texts are negotiated with participants, as well as with those who have become part of the research journey. (p. 172)

I negotiated with the participants to create research texts in consultation with my supervising committee. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) clarified that “Narrative inquirers understand data as field texts that are to be experienced as they are lived and told as narrative compositions” (p. 579). Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) outlined several considerations when designing a narrative inquiry, which included to be always thinking narratively and that writing a research text is a narrative act. Analysing occurred in the field, it occurred when collecting field notes, and it occurred during the interim and final research texts negotiations (Lange & Moore, 2017).

8. Representing Narratives of Experience in Ways that Show Temporality, Sociality and Place

Narrative inquirers entered the field together as researcher and participant. There was fluidity in representing research texts and analysis. I represented temporality, social, and place. Clandinin and Caine (2013) wrote:

“It is important in each narrative inquiry to attend to the three dimensions of the narrative inquiry spaces in the unfolding and iterative research process. It is in attending to these dimensions that insight into experiences relevant to the research puzzle can be brought forth in all of their complexity.” (p. 173)

Upon embarking on the narrative inquiry, there was a “simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). The fact that narrative inquiry investigates these three commonplaces simultaneously was crucial in attending to the wonders of which I sought a better understanding. Connelly and Clandinin explained that “Narrative inquirers do not describe an event, person, or object as such, but rather describe them with a past, present, and a future” (p. 479). Temporality in this narrative inquiry was vital because lives are constantly evolving. Sociality was important to the focus and wonder of my research – the life experience of self-identifying Métis educators. Connelly and Clandinin added:

Narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions and, at the same time, with social conditions. By personal conditions we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of the person, whether inquirer or participant. By social conditions we mean the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people or otherwise, that form the individual’s context. (p. 480)

The sociality aspect of narrative inquiry highlighted the relationship between the inquirer and the participant and the participant and their interactions with others. My research query was understanding and meaning making of the participants’ lives in relation to my own experience. Caine, Estefan and

Clandinin (2013) explained, “it is important that narrative inquirers carefully consider who they are, and who they are becoming, in the research puzzle” (p. 577). The final commonplace, place, is described by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) as “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place” (p. 480). A simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces was necessary to this narrative inquiry, while there are other important elements when planning a narrative inquiry. Seiki (2014) reflected on the three-dimensional inquiry space:

As I walk alongside her in the narratives and explore her many meanings, Audrey and narrative inquiry help me to redefine our lived histories as shared. This learning from narrative inquiry, through the process of going inward and outward, across time and space, is what I seek to bring into my course pedagogy. (p. 30)

I investigated through time and place with the participants and balanced the commonplaces. Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) described a need to balance the commonplaces, which Connelly and Clandinin (2006) said was:

to be described in research texts is the analysis and interpretation processes. Although there are many ways to think about the move from field texts to research texts, that is, the papers, books, dissertations to be made public, all forms of narrative inquiry emphasize that considering the contextual and relational are important. This element draws attention to the importance of defining and the balancing the commonplaces. (p. 482)

As a Métis person, I balanced the commonplaces, as well as used analysis and interpretation processes from an Indigenous Paradigm, which Kovach (2014) described as a way, “to articulate an Indigenous belief system. As with other qualitative paradigms an Indigenous research paradigm can be described as a set of assumptions, values, and practices that comprise an approach or perspective” (p. 101). There are commonalities amongst Indigenous community based knowledges which Kovach detailed that

documented “Indigenous community based knowledges, show a shared set of beliefs among Indigenous peoples and the collectives. Such beliefs include the acknowledgment of process, wholeness and the collective” (p. 101). Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) added, “our understanding deepens as we retell and relive our lived stories over time, place, and social contexts” (p. 581). I analyzed and processed research texts by balancing the three commonplaces, in conjunction with the Canadian Council on Learning’s (2007) Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. Using this lifelong learning model as an additional support for the three commonplaces, I inquired “into the story” (Davis & Murphy, 2016, p. 10) of the phenomena of the participants’ experience.

9. Relational Response Communities

The relational response community I sought for assistance were the supervisor, Marie Battiste and committee member Shaun Murphy. I sought assistance from Battiste because of her knowledge and experience in Indigenous ethics and research, and Murphy because of his experience and expertise in narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Caine (2013) detailed, “These communities often consist of people the researcher values and trusts to provide responsive and responsible dialogue about his/her unfolding inquiry” (p. 173). The relational response community were important for guidance, understanding, and advice. Clandinin and Caine explained:

It is through a response community that narrative inquirers are often reminded to engage in this interplay and iterative process, to inquire into, and to revisit field texts, to address issues of personal, practical, and social significance, and to inquire into new research puzzles. (p. 174)

It was integral to have experienced researchers and narrative inquirers included so there was relevant guidance and knowledge to share.

10. Justifications – Personal, Practical, and Social

Justifying the inquiry was crucial, there was a personal, practical, and social reason before beginning the narrative inquiry (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007). Clandinin and Caine (2013) outlined, “As narrative inquirers we need to be able to justify narrative inquiries in three ways: personally, practically, and socially” (p. 174). The personal justification for me was detailed in the narrative beginning where I described Métis identity as a teacher and the confusion and tension involved, a practical justification were issues of Indigenous education, not only pertaining to educators, but to students as well. In better understanding the life experiences of Métis educators, I seek to inform policy that will benefit Indigenous students and educators. The “so what?” question is applicable to bettering the situation of Indigenous people in education. Answering “Who cares?” Indigenous educators and students will care, as well as people involved in the education field who wish to better serve and understand how further success for Indigenous people in education may be achieved. The social justification was changing, better understanding, and awareness of Métis and Indigenous teachers and students, and their unique places in educational and non-educational communities. The stories of Métis educators that were shared in the inquiry are significant. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) explained the importance of stories:

Stories are difficult to argue with when presented as good practice and therefore they are immediately problematic as representations of life. This is because stories are both connected to, and representative of, identities, and thus to criticize a story is often therefore seen as a criticism of identity. (p. 463)

This is especially true for narrative inquiries, as Yuan (2017) added “narrative inquiry can serve as an effective research tool that can shed light on the various identities derived from people’s social practice” (p. 478). Stories were important in justifying the social aspect of the narrative inquiry. Beijgaard et al. (2004) included, “Through storytelling, teachers engage in narrative ‘theorizing; and based on that, teachers may further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories”

(p. 121). Shedding light on these stories will broaden and strengthen the public's view of Métis teachers and students. My justification was an interest in the experience of educators who have possibly had similar experiences to myself, and how I could learn from their experiences to inform and improve my practice and pedagogy. I believe it not only benefited myself, but other educators as well - Métis or non-Métis. The issues the study addressed are plentiful, and a narrative inquiry was advantageous in discovering knowledge and understanding. Positioning the inquiry alongside other phenomenon found within qualitative and Indigenous methodologies was essential (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007). This inquiry broadened and expanded Indigenous research. Its focus is particular to specific Métis experience and how the participants navigated their lives within that lived identity, and what role their culture and identity played in shaping that experience, while my story was positioned in relation.

11. Attentive to Audience

I was aware of the audiences who read and were impacted by this research. Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) wrote that it is essential to understand your audience. For the purpose of this inquiry these include Aboriginal communities, academic professional communities, and the public. They also wrote that it is important to be aware how research may be judged - by the academic professionals, Aboriginal communities, and the public. They also noted, "[N]arrative inquirers also need to be always attentive to, and 'make explicit, the social significance of their work and the larger body of literature to which their inquiry makes a contribution'" (pp. 32-33). These design elements were foundational for this narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Caine (2013) also wrote "In narrative inquiry it is imperative to address the questions of how larger social, institutional, and cultural narratives inform our understanding and shape the researchers' and participants' stories to live by" (p. 175). The research must be pertinent and relevant to the audiences. They added, "While research texts are negotiated between researcher and participants, researchers also owe responsibility to the scholarly community and must compose

research texts that answer the questions of ‘so what?’ or ‘who cares?’” (p. 175). Trahar (2009) quoted Mishler (2004) and included that:

Narrative inquirers are cognisant of audience. They will be the audience for their narrator, and then in turn they re-tell the stories to other audiences – their readers. Narrative inquirers recognise that a story will differ depending on the listener and the teller, when the story is told and in what context.

Stories can and will be interpreted differently depending on the audience, so it was critical to be aware and sensitive to the different audiences, so that the research was relevant and honest.

12. Commitment to Understanding Lives in Motion

This narrative inquiry is not a final statement or the authority on the participants’ lives and experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Clandinin and Caine maintained:

As narrative inquirers we enter into the research in the midst, in the midst of our own lives and in the midst of our participants’ lives. Recognizing this also means that there will never be a final story, that each story and experience begs for a new story to be told, for the experience to be retold and also relived. (pp. 175-176)

Every life and every inquiry is unique. Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) stated:

...the uniqueness of each study, allows narrative inquirers to offer some sense of what it is that can be known about a phenomenon that could not be known, at least in the same way, by other theories, methods, or lines work. (p. 30)

The focus of the inquiry was very specific, so it demanded that the research methodology considered the unlikeness of each participants’ lived experience, knowing that each life is ever evolving and changing.

Conclusion

This section on methodology began by explaining and acknowledging Indigenous research since this was a narrative inquiry by me – a Métis man. After exploring Indigenous research, this section explored a foundational theory of narrative inquiry – Deweyan ontology of experience. The investigation of Deweyan ontology of experience set context for the methodology – narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry was described and examined. Twelve important touchstones in becoming a narrative inquirer were reviewed and made clear in connection to this project. In the next chapter, I will explain the ethics process from the application to receiving approval.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHITEMUD: RESEARCH METHODS AND ETHICS

Introduction

Indigenous research protocols, be they in protocol form or as a statement of principles, outline specific guidelines that counter objectionable research practices around governance, consent, ownership, and use. Furthermore, protocols stress the responsibility on that part of the researcher who seeks to work with Indigenous peoples who hold their cultural knowledges as sacred. Such protocols work to strengthen the overall ethical foundation of a research project, for in elevating tribal epistemologies Western ontology reveals itself in contrast, providing a more conceptually transparent starting place. (Kovach, 2009, p. 143)

I proceeded cautiously into Indigenous research because Kovach (2009) stated, “Attempting to validate Indigenous knowledges according to Western terms and assumptions creates an ethical problem” (p. 148). There were many facets to consider with seeking validity and ethical approval for Indigenous research. Kovach also explained, “Validity, then, is determined by the methodology and community” (p. 149). Through my chosen methodology, narrative inquiry, with the understanding that Indigenous knowledge is “the expression of the vibrant relationships between people, their ecosystems and the other living beings and spirits that share their land” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 42), and by building relationship and trust with the participants, who are members of the Métis community, validity was achieved. The first section will entail ethics and commitments in regards to this narrative inquiry, and will proceed onto the following section on methods and ethics. This section will contain: Identification, Brief Overview of Research Project, Project Details, Estimation of Risks and Benefits, Participant Recruitment, Consent Process, and Data Security and Storage. Within each section, I will describe how it will be in accordance with Indigenous protocol and guidelines.

Narrative Inquiry

This section will explain the relational and ethical commitments of this narrative inquiry. It will also explain how I will attend to those commitments for the study. Research participants, composing field texts, from field texts to research texts, in the midst, and relational ethics are the areas that will be explored.

Research Participants

The participants in this study are self-identified Métis educators who are respected within their communities. The participants are known professional contacts of my thesis supervisor, Dr. Marie Battiste. The participants are experienced educators who have taught at elementary, high school, and post-secondary institutions. The educators have direct experience with Métis culture and identity.

Composing Field Texts

Throughout the proposed study, I listened to the stories and experiences of the participants. I listened to their stories as I met with participants individually. While recording conversations and interviews, I created field notes. The interview was the main source of field texts. Due to the relational nature of narrative inquiry, the interview was structured, but there were opportunities for deviations and exploring because of the uniqueness of each person's life and experiences. There were three interviews with each participant, and the interviews were about one hour in length each. I had a prepared set of interview questions (**Appendix C**) that entailed how they lived their lives as Métis people. The questions were structured and inspired by the Canadian Council on Learning's Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. I was open to other ways of tracking stories, experiences, and memories as the study unfolded that the participant or I may have brought forth, but that was not necessary. During the process of creating field texts, I was aware of situating them within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space.

From Field Texts to Research Texts

I composed narratives of the educators' experience in understanding Métis identity and how they navigated their lives while being in between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds. This research looked to better understand how Métis educators can work as teachers while maintaining their culturally identity and how that impacts Aboriginal students. The research texts were developed from the field texts and situated within the three-dimensional inquiry space in conjunction with the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model.

The final research document was developed as the inquiry advanced, but the process remained the same. I listened to each participants' story as they were being recorded. From their experiences I created narrative accounts. I positioned each story alongside one another to comprehend how the participants navigated their Métis identity as educators. I positioned my stories as a Métis educator to make better sense of my experiences.

In the Midst

The narrative inquiry was not the beginning nor the end of the participants' life stories. By adhering to relational commitments and entering into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry, I understood that the participants' lives and stories were ever evolving. Clandinin and Caine (2013) said researchers must be aware that "participants are always in the midst of their lives and their lives are shaped by attending to past, present, and unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives" (p. 170). I balanced the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place throughout the study, with the knowledge that the participants' and my life were always changing, and that there was no finality to the participants' stories. I was cognizant of the time and place of the stories and memories the participants shared with me.

Relational Ethics

Throughout the inquiry, it was crucial to build and maintain relationships prior, during, and after the inquiry. Relationships were needed due to the ethical commitments of being a narrative inquirer. Without the relationship, there could not be a narrative inquiry. I negotiated anonymity with the participants, and it was their wishes to remain anonymous, so we created pseudonyms for people and places. The field notes and texts were shared with the participants as the inquiry developed for continued communication and member checking. All of these details were shared with the participants at the beginning of the project through verbal and written communications, consent letters, and regular meetings. I aimed to be a thoughtful, caring, and understanding listener when participants were sharing. I understood that sharing about past experiences was difficult and may have caused distress, and I offered to stop the interview and to begin if, and when, the participant was ready. Even the relationship began before the research and continues afterwards, we negotiated the beginning and the completion of the research process. I searched for potential opportunities that would benefit the participants as a result of this research and potential publication.

Methods and Ethics

The title of the project is “Whitemud: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Self-Identifying Métis Educators” with the principal investigator being the supervisor Marie Battiste, and the student investigator is Kristian Roy. It was a project undertaken from the University of Saskatchewan in the Department of Educational Foundations. Dr. Marie Battiste is a professor at the University of Saskatchewan in the Department of Educational Foundations. The research sites where the project were carried out were mutually agreed upon informal but relatively quiet locations in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. This project did not seek approval from any other Research Ethics Board. This project did not seek to collect data from schools, within health regions or any other organizations, agencies,

or community groups. This project did not contact potential participants or collect data from any such organizations. There was no funding for the proposed project.

Brief Overview of Research Project

My project was concerned with the stories and experiences of self-identified Métis educators. I was interested in their stories, and wanted to understand how they navigated their lives through their identity, professional lives, and culture. Through listening and the telling and reliving of our stories of two people who self-identify as Métis and who have roles in education, the participants provided me with a deeper understanding of their experiences, which will be valuable to other Métis, and non-Métis, people and educators. What was most important to me was how their identity affected the participants' everyday lives, and the educational positions and the interconnectedness of the two. The project sought to answer the questions how has culture and identity been key factors in their lived experience. This project used narrative inquiry to explore this query, and recognized Indigenous methodologies and frameworks. The significance of this project will be seen in providing examples of how identity played a central role in the participants' lives, which will result in more models of success for Indigenous students in the continuation of lifelong learning. This will inform policy, programming, and curriculum on the education of Indigenous people. It adds to the breadth and diversity of Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers on Indigenous people.

The individual interviews transpired over an hour to allow for the participants to navigate the questions. A time allotment of one hour was necessary. There were three meetings with each participant.

Project Details

There were emails exchanged and phone calls made in the relationship building with participants. The research involved Métis people. A gift of jam and tea was offered to the participants as is the custom within the Métis community. Kovach (2009) wrote, "Integral to sharing knowledge is the

matter of confidentiality” (p. 148), but, due to the nature of this project, she also added that “Of course, some research projects (Indigenous or not) demand confidentiality for good reasons. However, in instances where risk is minimal, there should be an option” (p. 148). Due to the relational commitments of narrative inquiry, these details were understood well in advance to the beginning of the inquiry, and there was a familiarity and the three-dimensional inquiry space was established.

Estimation of Risks and Benefits

This project was considered to be minimal risk. There was a risk of psychological or emotional harm or discomfort if the participants recalled and shared difficult parts of their past, which could revive past trauma or cause stress or anxiety, but this risk was below minimal and cautionary at most. Risk was mitigated by offering time to recover or by rescheduling the meeting. There is no legal or social repercussions, and there is no risk of physical harm or discomfort. Participants were not expected to share traumatic parts of their past, and were encouraged to stop sharing if it caused harm or discomfort. I believe the risk was worth the benefits because as Bouvier, Battiste and Laughlin (2016) wrote:

improved learning is not achieved by identifying individual successes, as is often reported among Canadians. In the case of Aboriginal peoples’, success in learning are intimately tied to the overall community orientations and collective well-being demonstrated from the applications of their learning. (p. 28)

The minimal risk involved in this project will merit positive outcome for Indigenous people in the strengthening and improving of educational practices which may improve positive life outcomes for Indigenous students and people.

Participant Recruitment

The participants were known associates of the supervisor and they fit the criteria of being self-identifying Métis people who have roles in educational settings, with vast experiences in educational

and cultural domains. Recruitment of one of the participants first occurred through the supervisor, as they are known associates. Once initial contact was made by the supervisor, informal meetings to build relationships were set. Informal meetings were arranged by phone and email. The second participant was known through a mutual friend. Negotiation and involvement into the inquiry also occurred through an exchange of emails and phone calls. A letter of introduction was presented to the participants detailing the investigator and aim of the study. Once there was a relationship formed, then there was an offer to the participants to participate and share their stories. The investigator is Métis, as were the participants, so there was a relational connection in being part of the same Indigenous group. The relationship between the investigator and participants was that of student to teacher. The investigator's goal was to learn from the participants, as they were the knowledge keepers.

As a Métis person, I understood that:

Simply because a researcher is Indigenous (or following an Indigenous framework) does not automatically translate into community trust. Trust needs to be earned internally. Trusting relationships are engendered in a variety of ways: following protocol, showing guardianship over sacred knowledges, standing by cultural validity of knowledge, and giving back. (Kovach, 2009, p. 147)

I engendered a trusting relationship in all ways possible. "There are a host of ways to give back, and for Indigenous academic researchers sharing knowledge is the most obvious means" (p. 149). As a researcher, this will be the most effective way to give back. "Giving back does not only mean dissemination of findings; it means creating a relationship throughout the entirety of the research" (p. 149). I created and maintained relationships with the participants throughout the whole inquiry process. This included establishing relationships before, during, and after the completion of the inquiry.

Consent Process

Asking for consent happened after a relationship was formed and trust was established between investigator and participant. “Within Indigenous methodologies, researchers must care for the stories and those who offer them. In asking for individuals’ stories, it matters to respect their dignity, their voice, and their experience on their terms” (Kovach, 2016, p. 227). Consent was obtained in person, as there was a relationship formed by this point in the project. I plan to share the project results by giving the participants a hard copy of the thesis, though due to the relational commitments of narrative inquiry, participants were involved in determining research texts throughout the inquiry process. Participants were told in writing, if, and when, they agreed to participate, that they had the right to withdraw from the project.

I followed the University of Alberta’s Elder Protocols and Guideline for approaching and relationship building with the participants, which Kovach (2009) described as “Protocols are most useful when followed in conjunction with local community protocols (which may be research specific or not)” (p. 143). I used the University of Alberta’s protocols and guidelines because it was developed within the traditional homeland of the Métis, and it is succinct, clear, informative and comprehensive.

Kovach (2009) relayed four key principles that are used to counter exploitive research practices are ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP). (p. 143). Kovach explained, “*Ownership* assumes that a community owns cultural knowledge or data collectively, in the same manner that an individual owns personal information, and so the community’s consent is required to use its knowledge” (p. 145). Prior to collecting data from participants, I asked for oral permission to use the data from them, as they are knowledge holders, and their communities are the rightful owners. Kovach further stated, “*Control* asserts that First Nations people have a right to control various aspects of the research on them, including the formulation of research frameworks, data management, and dissemination.” (p. 145). In my letter of introduction, I detailed how I plan to use the data and for what purpose. I sought oral

permission from the participants that this was an acceptable use of the data as well as an acceptable formulation of the framework. Next, “Access is the ability for Indigenous people to retrieve and examine data that concern them and their communities” (p. 145). I shared the data collected with individual participants and asked if there was any data that they wished not to be shared. And finally, “The principle of *possession* refers to the actual possession of data. Although not a condition of ownership per se, possession (of data) is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected” (p. 145). If there was an objection to my possession of the data from the participants, then I would not use the data in question.

I adhered to OCAP because Kovach (2009) said that it:

outlines clearly the governance that Indigenous people are asserting over their knowledges. It is a set of principles that work to decolonize the Indigenous-Western research relationship, and provides researchers with explicit guidelines for assessing whether said research is exploitive or beneficial to Indigenous interests. (p. 145)

My intentions were to follow Indigenous protocol and guidelines, while maintaining trusting and valid relationships, throughout the study to establish ethical and meaningful research. I received approval from Behavioural Research Ethics at the University of Saskatchewan to begin research on August 9, 2018. I offered a gift of tea and jam as is the protocol within the Métis community.

Data Security and Storage

I conducted the data collection. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the original data of the study. I am in charge of data storage which is held in a password protected computer backed up regularly onto a password protected backup system. There are audio recordings and written transcripts of said recordings and they will remain with me during transportation from collection site. The supervisor, Dr. Marie Battiste, keeps the data. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years, where

after 5 years the audio recording will be deleted and the paper transcripts will be shredded. The data is intended for a thesis and journal article.

The OCAP principles, as detailed by Kovach (2009), of ownership and possession were shared and discussed with participants, and there was no objection to access of data or the manner in which I gathered and stored data.

My intentions for this project were to benefit the participants, investigator, and Indigenous people as learners and positive signifiers of culture and identity. “As Indigenous scholar Marlene Brandt-Castellano suggests, Indigenous ethics can never be limited to a defined set of rules; they are about knowing who you are, the values you hold, and your understanding of how you fit within a spiritual world” (Kovach, 2009, p. 146). I believe in the person I am, and the values that I hold, that I respectfully, honestly, truthfully, and faithfully followed research practices that are true to Indigenous ethics and protocol

CHAPTER FIVE

DOROTHY'S INQUIRY

Introduction

Before sharing the inquiry into the life experiences and stories of the participants, as well as the narratives and threads that emerged, I am making a distinction between two separate ideas. The first idea that needs to be addressed is narrative coherence (Carr, 1986) which is the idea that all lives, and the moments within a life, have meaning and a purpose. A narrative exists behind these lives and moments. The second idea to be brought to attention is liminality. Liminality is a state of being where a person enters into a moment of transformation (Heilbrun, 1999). These two ideas are foundational to understanding the narrative inquiries that will be presented in the proceeding chapters. The names of people and places are pseudonyms to protect and ensure anonymity for the participants.

Narrative Coherence

Entering into the narrative inquiry three-dimensional space compels the researcher to view the participants' lives as a narrative and that all experiences have meaning. Carr (1986) concurred, "...that narrative coherence belongs to even the most elementary experience or action, that it is an essential structural feature of the very fact of having an experience or performing an action" (p. 88) By inquiring into the participants lives and experiences, with a narrative understanding, I found the threads emerging from their stories.

Narrative coherence is what we find or effect in much of our experience and action, and to the extent that we do not, we aim for it, try to produce it, and try to restore it when it goes missing for whatever reason. It is in this broad sense that we insist that everyday reality is permeated with narrative. (Carr, pp. 90-91)

Throughout the inquiry each moment and story that was shared was considered to have meaning with its own narrative. It is from Carr's understanding of narrative coherence that field texts were derived from field notes that ultimately resulted in interim texts and finally into the research text. This process included the participants and all aspects of their individual narratives were thoughtfully and respectfully considered from the recorded conversations with the participants. The researcher thus is not author of the participant narratives but a conduit for sharing the participants' unique and meaningful experience.

But the narrative coherence of a life-story is a struggle nonetheless, and a responsibility which no one else can finally lift entirely from the shoulders of the one who lives that life. It is a struggle with two aspects, furthermore, as we have already seen: one to live out or live up to a plan or narrative, large or small, particular or general; the other to construct or choose that narrative. (Carr, p. 96)

The researcher and participants are Métis educators, so that relational connection was established prior to negotiating entry into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Once entry was achieved, the narrative and the stories shared were as a result of the participants and researcher's conversations.

Liminality

The specific instances that arose and were inquired into further throughout the three separate meetings with each participant could be examples that display liminality. This is a state of being at the entry point of change. Heilbrun (1999) described liminality in regards to female feminists:

At the same time, the refusal of many women to mask their common role as their choice had encouraged them to risk existing in a state of liminality, that is, in a state that is on the threshold

of societal transformation. And, as I said last night, liminality is the condition of moving from one state to another under conditions which are, by definition, unstable. (p. 35)

In reference to Heilbrun describing the plight of women feminists, Métis teachers also face struggles that place them on threshold of societal transformation. This could be demonstrated in the first narrative where an ally teacher affected the course of a student's future, as well in the second narrative where a teacher's experience with a co-worker was similar to being in a state of liminality. These are different and unique narratives, although a case could be made for their entering into a state of liminality. "But the most salient sign of liminality is its unsteadiness, its lack of clarity about exactly where one belongs and what one should be doing, or wants to be doing" (Heilbrun, p. 3, 1999). In continuing Heilbrun's description of female feminists, there is also the notion that by entering into a state of liminality and challenging society norms, the oppressed current situation was a result of their own choices. This leads to trepidation about entering into liminality. It is difficult for any person, regardless of their age or experience.

The essence of liminality is revealed in women's experience once they are willing to move from convention to another form of self-expression. And to do this they must, of course, have conquered the two problems I have quoted to you: the difficulty of individual dissent, and the recognition that female oppression is always masked as women's choice, what women want. (Heilbrun, p. 38, 1999)

The state of liminality is acknowledged in the following narrative inquiries. These narratives are moments from the participants' lives that came to the surface from conversations and were inquired into further in each following conversation.

Introduction to Dorothy's Narrative

The first narrative to be shared is organized in the following format. The first part is a narrative text created from field notes and other field texts. It shares a moment of liminality for the participant. After the narrative text, a brief biography of the participant forms the beginning of our conversations we had over three meetings. Following the biography, I revisit and unpack the narrative text. The final section is an analysis of the inquiry articulated through the two strands that are woven through the participant's story.

Narrative Text

A grade eight student is entering her classroom. She goes to her desk and sits. She is friends with the other students in her class, and the students all wear uniforms but her uniform feels different, as she is one of the few visibly Indigenous students in the classroom. She has recently moved into the city from the hamlet where she grew up. She has faced discrimination and racism in the city. While passing by in their vehicles, people have yelled derogatory things about Indigenous people towards her and her mother. Her mother has moved the family into the city because there are more opportunities for the children. They owned their house in the hamlet, yet rent is expensive in the city, and it is even harder to raise a family as a single parent. Her mother depends on the children to help with chores at home. Going to school is much different from being at home. She has been taught that Louis Riel and the Métis are traitors. She has been taught that Indigenous people are savage, barbaric, and uncivilized. She carries this tension into the classroom. However, on this particular day, her teacher has planned a lesson that is unlike any other she has received at school. This should not come as a surprise, as the teacher is new to the school and different from the other teachers, who all happen to be nuns. On this day, the class will revise and edit their textbook *Pageants of the Past*. This textbook is a source of discomfort for her, as it is here that she has learned to be embarrassed of her ancestry. She is

friends with her classmates, but they do not share her enthusiasm for this assignment. Their Grade 8 teacher has asked the class to get out their whiteout fluid, which is a novelty at the time, and to help edit the textbook. The teacher has written words such as 'pagan', 'heathen', 'savage', and 'barbaric' on the board with corresponding page numbers. Their task is to use their whiteout fluid to erase these words, as they are derogatory and racist and are spreading misinformation about Indigenous people. Before the teacher can finish explaining the directions, the girl has already begun.

(Interim research text created from interviews, 2019))

Dorothy's Life Experience

Dorothy was born and raised in a small French hamlet in a prairie province. She came from a very large family of ten children. There were mostly French families in the hamlet, but also a few Métis families as well. Dorothy had many neighborhood friends and recalled being comfortable and familiar with the town. The family lived without having a lot of money, with all the children helping with most of the family chores, and the older siblings taking care of the younger siblings. Although the family did not have much money, they at least owned the house in which they lived. Dorothy's father left the family when she was very young, but not without leaving an impact on the family. Her parents are both Métis, with her mother being from the southern part of the province with her having lighter skin complexion and her father having darker skin tones and being from further up north in the province. Dorothy has skin tones closer resembling her father. Dorothy remembered when she was very young her father gathering the children with darker skin complexion for photos to share with his family. Dorothy recalled Michif and Cree being spoken in the house when she was young and that her older siblings would still have a grasp of the languages to this day, but unfortunately, she was not given the chance to learn Michif or Cree. Her father decided that her mother should not speak any Indigenous languages in front of the children because he reasoned he wanted a better future for them, and to be given the best

opportunity for a more prosperous future, the children should be speaking English or French. Dorothy shared instances of her mother taking phone calls in the front porch, so the children would not be exposed to the Michif or Cree that was spoken. At the time, Dorothy said that she was happy to be learning French at school and speaking English at home.

Dorothy had a love for reading during her childhood, and this is where she experienced the outside world. A “library on wheels” would visit the small hamlet to provide its residents with an opportunity to check out books. She would take the maximum number of books allowed – usually around thirty. Dorothy did not see herself represented nor did she feel very comfortable at school. There was incongruity between her home life and school life. Dorothy went to a French Catholic elementary school in the hamlet, but once she reached junior high school, she was required to take the bus to go to school in a small city. It was around this time that Dorothy, her mother and siblings moved into the nearby small city. The decision to move into the city was based on the notion that there would be more opportunities for the children, such as public facilities for swimming, and there would not be a need to endure long bus rides to school.

There were several challenges that faced the family. The first issue was a financial one. The family owned their house in the hamlet, but had to rent a house in the city, which proved to be a burden on the single parent family. The other issue was the racism that the family faced in the city. Dorothy revealed that she experienced racial slurs and cigarette butts thrown at her mother and herself from motorists. It was a tumultuous six months in the city. It was during this time that the narrative that began this section occurred. Dorothy switched schools after Grade 8 and went to the public high school. She had few good teachers there, but she also found herself losing touch as a student, and she didn’t feel engaged as a student until her final year in Grade 12.

After high school, she enrolled in the in post-secondary program for Métis and non-status First Nations in a large city. Here she found other Métis students who shared similar experiences to her own. She thrived in this environment. She had great teachers who were Indigenous. She learned to be proud of the history of her ancestors. She always felt pride in herself while growing up, but in this post-secondary program, she was with other like-minded individuals. She completed her education in becoming a certified teacher and soon began the job search. She was interviewed by a Catholic school division and was hired, but chose not to accept the contract. This in turn led to her to begin her teaching career in Northern Saskatchewan. She loved working with Indigenous children and teaching them about their shared culture and history.

Dorothy eventually found herself teaching in a large prairie city where she has spent the majority of her career. She has taught at many grade levels as well as worked as an administrator. She also spent a brief time teaching at a teacher education program for Métis and non-status First Nations, but soon returned to the schools to work with children. It was from her experience of working in schools that she decided to return to university to pursue a master's degree. This decision to pursue a master's degree stemmed from encounters she had while working in schools. These encounters included confronting co-workers about their opinion of Indigenous students and unfounded criticisms of her own pedagogy. She felt compelled to write about these experiences rather than just being upset.

A master's degree led Dorothy down an administrative path, which resulted in becoming a principal, and later an administrator in a post-secondary program providing leadership and mentorship to other Indigenous people on their paths to a teaching career.

Unpacking Narrative Text

Mrs. Knight was a new teacher at the Convent of Mother Mary. She was different from the other teachers at the school. "Most of our teachers were nuns and she was different. She wasn't a nun,

so everybody really liked her” (January 8, 2019). Dorothy described the textbook that was being used in the classroom.

I remember in Grade 8 the social studies textbook was called *Pageants of the Past*. It was the history, in social studies, of colonizers, and what they did to Indigenous people, like Indians, and as they made their gateway to the north. And it wasn’t a depiction of course, against the colonizer in a bad way, it was glorified. (January 8, 2019)

This textbook made Dorothy feel ashamed of her ancestry, of her family, and of herself. The students wore uniforms at this school which Dorothy found that she “kinda liked it because I could wear uniform and no one could tell me if I had nice clothes or not” (January 15, 2019). Dorothy also mentioned how her uniform always felt dirty. She would look at her classmates’ uniforms and figured that those uniforms were somehow superior. She shared, “I felt different because of class, but I also felt different because I had a darker skin coloring” (January 8, 2019). Her uniform was no different from those of her classmates, but the feeling of inferiority was present. Racial identity development begins during childhood, so it is important to have a positive representation of one’s own culture to prevent possible psychological issues later in life (Jugert, Leszczensky, & Pink, 2019; Umana-Taylor, 2018; White et al., 2018). These feelings of inferiority based on her appearance and the curriculum being taught were released on the day that Mrs. Knight began her lesson.

She went up to the blackboard and she said “Here’s some page numbers, and on these page numbers, I want to turn to these page numbers,” and some students were asking, “Well we’re supposed to be making some book covers”. You know how you make book covers for textbooks? And she [Knight] said “Yes, yes we’ll make book covers, but I want you right now to use the whiteout bottle I gave you and to...” – whiteout was phenomenal in those days. “And I

want you to go to those page numbers, and I want you to white these words out.” (January 8, 2019)

Dorothy was motivated and excited to begin the activity; however, other students in her class were not sharing the sentiment.

She wrote pagan, heathen, savage, barbaric. And she said, “Every page that I put on p. 18, p. 76, p. 23 what have you, you must [whiteout] these words, and you take this whiteout, and you white these names out, and I’m gonna teach you why I’m asking you to do that.” (January 8, 2019)

Dorothy immediately began the assignment, and recalled, “I felt a sense of glorification, I felt like, oh my god, this woman is saving me. She’s recognizing that I’m not a savage, that I’m not a heathen. She’s telling me to erase that from these books” (January 8, 2019). This demonstrates the opportunity teachers have in affecting their students. Mrs. Knight could have continued using the textbook and maintaining the status quo. Dorothy’s classmates were not as receptive.

So students were starting to raise their hands and say, “We gotta cover our books with the book jacket.” And she’d say, “No, this is what we’re doing today,” and they’d say, “I don’t think that we should be doing this, we’re not allowed to do this, our parents pay a caution fee.” I remember one girl was saying that so loudly. (January 15, 2019)

As I spoke to Dorothy in her office she recounted this story. I asked if the other students were concerned about damaging the textbook or if there was another reason for the objection of this lesson.

I remember sitting on the bus on my way home and thinking, they’re mad about their textbook being wrecked, they could care less about their textbook being wrecked. They were mad because somebody was saying something different from what they learnt. Native people

weren't heathens, they weren't savages, they weren't pagans, what other words do I remember her saying. We had to whiteout heathen, barbarian, savage, primitive. She made us whiteout all these words on different page numbers about our people. She started telling that that was written to tell people that they don't belong, that they're worthless, but this is all wrong information. It's one sided, and she started giving us other information to study. I'll always remember that. (January 15, 2019)

Dorothy explained that she felt liberated by this activity, and I inquired into what she was liberated from.

That nobody was calling me a savage anymore, that a teacher was actually saying, "Yeah, this is wrong. All the things that you think about yourself that was taught to you is wrong, and we're going to remove that wrongness and I'm going to teach you why." (January 23, 2019)

We talked about it being a mental liberation, and we discussed how her classmates were feeling a little unsure of their own preconceived superior notions of history. "My non-Indigenous friends, non-Indian or non-Métis friends were feeling a little squirmy in their desks because their people were being blamed for something" (January 23, 2019). I asked Dorothy about her feelings after this liberation – did this act empower her in any way? "I think it did, it helped me to talk with my mom about the school that's for sure. I think it helped me become prouder where I was coming from. I really do, I felt better about myself" (January 23, 2019). Our conversations led us to Mrs. Knight. I inquired into this teacher's motives and reasons for carrying put this exercise. Was she having students white out these words because there were Indigenous students present? "She would have done it regardless who was in there. She was really smart. She knew there was life beyond what was being presented to us. Know what I mean? She was a gifted teacher" (January 15, 2019). Dorothy explained that this teacher was a very caring teacher and she had the principal's support. Focusing on the factors and decisions that led

Dorothy to becoming a teacher, I wondered if Mrs. Knight had any effect on her career choice. “I think she had a bit of an effect. I haven’t really thought long and hard about that. But I think she did because I looked up to her and I admired her as a teacher” (January 15, 2019). I asked Dorothy if she ever found herself emulating in her teaching practice.

Yes, and I do do that. I’m always planning even to the day I’m living here ways that I could incorporate alternative understandings, ways I can promote things that are better, you know, looking for equal ways, looking for others to understand inequity and inequality. (January 15, 2019)

This simple act by one teacher, added to Dorothy’s other life experiences, positively affected so many other lives throughout Dorothy’s teaching career. Speaking from the time of our final meeting, I asked what she would say to Mrs. Knight today.

I would just thank you for how she treated me, and I would say, you know, I think of a lot you showed me that year and everything to do with why I decided why I wanted to teach. Why I decided I went out looking to try to learn more about who our people were. I wanted to validate, I’d tell her I wanted to validate who I was and you helped me validate it. Instead of being ashamed of it all the time. (January 23, 2019)

Whiting out those words had a profound effect on Dorothy. She never forgot the activity, and it is something that she has carried with her.

Threads

This section contains two strands that permeated the conversations that Dorothy and I exchanged. I will investigate the ideas of Métis identity and the use of the curriculum. This investigation will also relate these ideas in relation with the stories and moments that Dorothy shared.

Métis identity. Dorothy always knew that she was Métis. The uniqueness of the Métis culture was represented in her family. This representation was evident in the appearance of her parents. Her mother has a much lighter skin complexion than her father. This demonstrates that there is no one way that Métis are meant to appear. This is a diverse group of people, and they may look different from one another within a family. This poses challenges for Métis people on different levels. Dorothy was happy and proud of herself from a young age, although there was tension within her family about the use of Indigenous languages in the house. Dorothy's Métis identity was strong and visible in the home from a young age.

Dorothy's cultural identity was nearly invisible in the schools that she attended as a student. The occasional mention of the Métis and Indigenous people in school was in reference to being savage or barbaric. The cultural invisibility (Mahon, 2006; Sun & Starosta, 2006; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) led to feelings of shame and confusion as a student. Those feelings of shame were lifted on that fateful day in grade eight. The liberation that Dorothy felt using whiteout to erase those hurtful and damaging words led to instances throughout her life of standing up and either defending or promoting Métis and Indigenous people.

Historically the Métis people displayed a tendency to be fiercely proud and always prepared to defend their rights and ways of living (Logan, 2015). These tendencies can be traced back to the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, the Battle of Grand Coteau in 1851, the Red River Resistance in 1870, the Northwest Resistance in 1885, and the recognition of the Métis People as one of the Aboriginal groups in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (Isaac & Hoekstra, 2019). In all examples the Métis defended themselves and promoted their culture while maintaining pride and with conviction. Those values of bravery, pride, and believing in your convictions are present throughout Métis history. These values are also evident throughout the stories that Dorothy shared in the inquiry. It was as though Dorothy used

the curriculum as a vehicle to display these Métis values of bravery, pride, and believing in your convictions.

Dorothy shared a story about being wrongly accused at school because of her ancestry, and her mother demonstrated those Métis values as well.

I was with the group, the three girls that were white, that came from a little bit of money, were not even discussed in class, and they were the ones smoking the cigarettes. Dorothy was the one kicked out of school for three days for the smell of the cigarette smoke, and I didn't even own smoke, but I was standing with them across the street when they were smoking, and I'm the one that got a three day suspension, cause that teacher knew that she could get away with it with me. (January 15, 2019)

This was a difficult situation for a Métis to be Métis at the time due to the prevalent racism in society and it would have been challenging for a Métis parent to confront the wrongdoing and face the racism in a colonial construct such as a school.

Dorothy: ...and I found out afterwards that my mom did go to the school and tell all those people that you're picking on Dorothy because for number one she doesn't smoke, for number two she doesn't have money for cigarettes, number three nobody believed her, and I found out that you guys were the only ones that kicked her out, you didn't kick anyone else out. So she did go to the principal, but they didn't really listen.

Kristian: They didn't listen.

Dorothy: No.

(Taken from interview conversation, January 15, 2019)

It took a lot of bravery and conviction for her mother to enter the school to confront the wrongdoing that Dorothy faced, but this was typical of her upbringing. She came from a very large family where you had to stand up for yourself or get lost in the shuffle.

Curriculum. Dorothy's narrative contained instances of pride, perseverance, empowerment, and determination. These are values and characteristics that the Métis people have shown throughout their history. She demonstrated these values through the curriculum in several instances in the stories that shared. The first story is about her Grade 8 teacher Mrs. Knight; the next story is about an interaction with the parent of a non-Indigenous student, then a story about an experience with a colleague where she positioned her mainly indigenous classroom with a "gifted" group of students. In each story, Dorothy represented the Métis values of bravery, pride, and conviction to stand up for what you believe in.

The story of her Grade 8 teacher, Mrs. Knight, was notable because it contained examples of each. A connection could be made to this experience as an example of liminality for Dorothy. She entered the classroom that day feeling subjugated or invisible because of her appearance and her culture. Her teacher was the catalyst for her moment of change. This instance demonstrated the importance that teachers have in their students' lives. Teachers have the power to positively affect their students in the classroom. Mrs. Knight used active resistance to the curriculum's messaging and discourses about Indigenous peoples to enact this change.

Dorothy was aware of her Métis ancestry from a young age. She knew it was a unique and distinct culture (Andersen, 2014 & RCAP, 1996). The culture was part of her lived experiences and evident in her early experiences, but she rarely felt proud as a Métis student in school. Her teacher could have continued teaching the status-quo, and it would have gone unnoticed except to those

students it targeted as deficient and negative. Adult educator and settler Peters (2016) described the effect that teaching racist and false narratives have on non-Indigenous teachers.

One of the strongest emotions I experienced was a profound sense of shame. As I started to recognize how settlers very much like me have thought about and treated the Mi'kmaq for centuries, I began to wonder how, or if, I was any different than them. (p. 150)

Perhaps Mrs. Knight was also experiencing feelings of shame, as she decided that she was no longer going to continue this discourse. Peters (2016) also detailed how settlers may deny their wrongdoing because they may have never personally caused it. It is the role of ally teachers to address the problems and take ownership. By doing this, ally teachers are creating moments in their classroom for Indigenous students to build pride and confidence for themselves. For Dorothy, to learn that her culture was not savage and barbaric, it filled her with a sense of pride that she carried from that day moving forward. Peters (2016) explained how the curriculum in the jurisdiction she was researching promoted the superiority of the European settlers, and it reinforced that the Indigenous people had created their perceived deficits as though they were voluntary. This is similar to the curriculum to which Dorothy was subjected. This connects to the sensitive and important work of educating Indigenous students in a colonial structure such as a school. Caron in Goulet and Goulet (2014) described the importance of building relationships when working with students. To build relationships with Indigenous students, there must trust; to build trust, the teacher must see the students as people, and that is not possible if what is being taught is racist and derogatory. When considering implementing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into the curriculum, one must begin with the Indigenous community of the area (Bennett et al., 2018; Kennedy et al., 2019). The importance of positive self-image represented in the curriculum is key to creating the conditions necessary for student success in all classrooms.

Dorothy shared other stories during the inquiry of examples of creating positive self-image and cultural pride. These stories included examples of her as a student and as a teacher. She detailed a memory of a teacher she had when she first began university. He was an Anishinaabe man who instilled pride and confidence in Indigenous students. One of Dorothy's key memories of this teacher was his decision to not have the students take written notes, as this was not how Indigenous people traditionally learned. This eased the tension of the classroom and connected them to their ancestry, and manifested later in her career where she was always looking for alternative ways of learning and teaching.

Dorothy's sense of pride in herself and her culture was shifted on that day in Grade 8, and this happened because her teacher created the conditions for it. By modifying the textbook and adapting the curriculum, Dorothy's teacher altered not only the classroom's learning, but also Dorothy's own positive self-affirmation. The curriculum has the ability to enact and promote equity and equality.

Not only is the curriculum capable of promoting equity and equality, it also has the power to build relationships. Dorothy shared a story about a parent concerned about the curriculum.

...she said she wanted me to stop whatever I was doing in class because it had changed her little girl. So much that all her little girl ever talks about is wanting to be Dorothy. And I said, 'Well you know, sometimes at this age, when children are learning something that they really, really appreciate, they're so impressionable at this age, you know, she'll just learn some aspects of what I'm teaching, she's not gonna wanna be me.' Like I was trying to be realistic with this mom. But this mom told me that she was against some of the First Nations work and Métis work that I was presenting. I said well this is in the curriculum, you and I didn't have it when we were young, I said but I have to challenge my students with the learning and this is what I'm presenting. Keep in mind that we're pulling out non-Indigenous understandings, so that your

Michelle (the student) can share. And she was pretty against, she was pretty upset, but she didn't have much else to say after that. And I noticed that Michelle was still her kind self. I don't think she was moved. I think she listened to whatever her mom had to tell her cause she continued to learn. And at the end of the year, we were getting to leave for the day, and she had come into the room with mom, and they had some roses for me and some dream catcher earrings and mom had nothing but these great apologies to make to me. She said, "I learned through my daughter and I needed to understand that there is such a thing as lifelong learning and I was trying to get you to teach what I was use to and I learned from that." (January 15, 2019)

Dorothy kept to her convictions and stuck with what she was teaching. The parent learned just as much as her child did.

Another story of Dorothy using and displaying these strong cultural values through the curriculum was an experience between a coworker and herself. She was teaching in a community school, but this school was also the base program for "gifted" students. The students in the gifted class were to be given an additional math quiz, which was standardized with the possibility of awards. Dorothy's class, who were mainly Indigenous, were not included because the studying required for the quiz was deemed too burdensome. This decision was made without consulting Dorothy.

I went to her [principal] and I said to her that I would like to know why there are only forty grade six examinations in mathematics for grade math national exam. I said there's like thirty-three kids in Anderson's room leaving me with only seven exams. And she said "Oh Dorothy, I'll order you more." And then Dennis (co-worker) goes, "Well Dorothy, I'm the one who orders them, and I only ordered forty in case students lose one or one gets lost and I have copies. Never has the regular teacher upstairs here given the kids a test." And I said why? And he said, "Well

basically Dorothy, they really can't do it, my kids struggle with it, it's really hard." I said I teach this grade six curriculum to my kids. I taught math in the morning, I marked during the lunchtime, and then I would return them after lunch. The whole class, where they went, where they need to sharpen up on. We would do homework after school. (January 8, 2019)

Dorothy showed determination and conviction and the belief that she was doing what she believed was right. "These learning relationships need to embody careful balance between task orientation and task completion on the one hand, and caring and support on the other" (Macfarlane et al., 2008, p. 105). This continued until the end of the year. In June, on the last day of school, the principal approached Dorothy.

"Dorothy," and she broke down crying, she said, "the exams came back; we'll be handing out awards at the assembly today. The exam results came back, the exam you made your kids do." And I said, 'oh my god that's awesome' I said, 'and how'd they do' I said. She said, "Dorothy, they did better than the gifted room," and she was bawling. She said, "You have awards and medals to hand out." So I start phoning all these parents, we postponed [the subjects for the day], we played music and sang songs in the gym. (January 8, 2019)

These four stories that Dorothy shared demonstrated Métis cultural values that have been present throughout Métis history. The values of bravery, pride, and standing up for what is right. Dorothy animated the values through the curriculum as well as the strong belief in herself and her students.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a narrative constructed from field notes taken during our conversations. I then shared a brief biography of Dorothy's life also constructed from stories from our conversations. Next, I unpacked the narrative that began the chapter by sharing dialogue that Dorothy and I exchanged. Afterwards, I described the strands of Métis identity and moments of Dorothy projecting her Métis identity and values through the curriculum.

CHAPTER SIX

MATHILDE'S INQUIRY

Introduction

The second narrative to be shared is organized in the following format. The first part is a narrative text created from field notes and the field text. It shares a moment of liminality for the participant. After the narrative text there is a brief biography of the participant, which was formed from the conversations, we had over three meetings. Following the biography, I will revisit and unpack the narrative text. The final section will be an analysis of the inquiry and will be articulated through the two strands that are woven through the participant's story.

Narrative Text

An excited and newly hired teacher is working diligently preparing lessons and assignments for the upcoming school year. She is in the photocopy room, which is a hub of activity as other teachers are also preparing their own classes. The newly hired teacher is new to the profession, but she has had life experiences that most new teachers are lacking. She did not go to university directly after high school; rather she worked and had ambitions elsewhere. It was not until a friend mentioned to her about a teacher education program for Métis people that she seriously gave thought to attend post-secondary teacher education. She excelled in the teacher education program, and enjoyed the relational nature of her classmates and the faculty. Now that she graduated and was hired at a school, she could begin planning ways to include her culture into her classroom. This was a very exciting time. Working adjacent to her in the staffroom that day is a veteran teacher. This veteran teacher also has had many experiences. At one time, the veteran teacher worked as a substitute teacher. It was this topic that the veteran teacher was in the mood to discuss. She was chatting about other teachers who had put in their time on the substitute (sub) list and how it was difficult to transition from sub list to a permanent teaching

position. Obviously, the veteran teacher had had this conversation before with other people. The newly hired teacher politely acknowledged the conversation and agreed, and disagreed, as any person would to show that they were listening, but her mind was elsewhere. She was thinking of her class, her lessons, her assignments, and she was thinking about how the upcoming school year would unfold. The veteran teacher continued to speak aloud about who was on the sub list and who had been hired at what school and how difficult subbing was. All of a sudden, the veteran seemed to realize to whom she was speaking. “Oh that’s right. You didn’t sub. You got your job because you’re Métis.” The new teacher stopped what she was doing, processing what had just been said to her. Did she mishear? She must have misheard. But no, she had not misheard.

(interim research text created from interviews, 2019)

Mathilde’s Life Experience

Mathilde was born and raised in Western Canadian city. She grew up living near her grandparents, and this helped inform her cultural identity. She remembers spending time with her grandmother and hearing her speak Michif. She recognized that her grandmother used French words when she spoke Michif, but it was not like the French she was learning in school. Her grandmother would speak Michif on the phone with family and friends. Mathilde remembers learning some Michif words from playing cards with her grandmother. Unfortunately for Mathilde, her grandmother never fully taught her the language because her grandmother felt that she should speak French or English.

Before Mathilde was born, Mathilde’s family had moved to a large prairie city from a historic Métis settlement. Mathilde shared a humorous story that her father had told her about her grandfather moving an outhouse from the settlement into the city with a horse and wagon. This was years before Mathilde was born. The outhouse was moved into the city because the house in which they lived had no

plumbing. The scene was related as something out of a television program. The family was not affluent, but they were happy and they valued family, as there were large family gatherings around Christmas and New Year's Eve.

Mathilde felt a disconnect between her home life and her school life. "It's like we [The Métis] were invisible" (January 16, 2019). She did not see her cultural-self represented in the school environment, whether it was in the school structure, staff, or curriculum. On the rare occasion that she did happen to be taught something about the Métis, the one Métis historical character/hero Louis Riel was portrayed as a traitor.

Mathilde graduated from high school, but she did not immediately pursue a path towards becoming a teacher. She worked various jobs including being employed at a grocery store when the opportunity arose to attend university. She had been more than ten years removed from graduating high school. She attended the teacher education program for Métis and urban people and immediately felt comfortable and welcomed. She was learning to become a teacher with other Métis people who shared similar backgrounds and life experiences. She graduated from the program and was soon hired by a school division in the city, being placed at an urban inner-city school to begin teaching. This first teaching assignment is where the narrative text that began this chapter occurred.

Mathilde worked for several years as a teacher and soon decided to return to university to pursue a master's degree in administration after which she worked as a vice-principal. Soon after, her career further evolved to becoming principal while still volunteering and offering her time in various committees and other educational endeavours. She has had diverse experiences in education while maintaining a strong Métis identity. Her strong Métis identity has been crucial throughout her career as a teacher and administrator. She recalled having differences of opinion with non-Indigenous principals and their handling of student consequences. Mathilde has always relied upon a relational approach with

students. This is reflected in Goulet and Goulet (2014), “I build a community in the classroom by developing trust and a sense of belonging” (p. 115). This relational approach was demonstrated towards her students in her classroom as a teacher, but it was also evident when her role shifted to that of a principal. A relational approach to education was expressed at a school level with the staff as well, thus creating a familial culture in the building where she was an administrator. She thoughtfully and carefully explained to me how creating a relational environment in the school was paramount to a Métis worldview. She detailed the process in which the staff and she created belief statements rooted in a Métis world perspective. To begin the process, they discussed ways to create familiarity and a sense of family between staff and students, which began with how the staff would like the students to address them. Mathilde gave the students their own choices in how to address her. She offered “Ms. Mathilde”, “Aunty Mathilde”, and other variations. The students took to this and they valued the choice. I asked Mathilde about how she approached the staff with the topic, and she said it was straightforward. They had a staff meeting and everyone offered how they felt comfortable being addressed. I wondered if Indigenous staff preferred a more close intimate relational title or first name compared to non-Indigenous staff. She told me there were mixed answers; it all depended on the person. The name used for addressing someone was a small element in creating a school culture that was rooted in a relational Métis belief system.

Mathilde continually defends and promotes the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Métis culture. She has done this in the schools she has worked in and in the out of school educational roles that she has held. She sees the need for Métis culture to be not just an add-on to curriculum or lessons, to First Nations or French cultures, as being of the utmost importance. Her career has put her in a position to increase the visibility of the culture, and it is something that she does on a regular basis. Whether it is during a French language panel or on a board of non-Indigenous administrators and

officials, she told me the biggest challenge that Métis people face is the resistance to total inclusion of the culture and language. Métis culture and the Michif language must remain distinct.

Unpacking Narrative Text

Mathilde was a newly hired teacher at a community school in a Western Canadian city where she shared that “the staff when I got there was primarily non-Indigenous. I think I was the only Indigenous teacher in the school” (January 31, 2019). A less experienced person stepping into this situation may have found the circumstances daunting. She arrived to the profession a little later in life. “I never thought I wanted to be a teacher. That was never in the cards for me” (January 16, 2019). That changed when a family friend encouraged her to apply for a teacher education program for Indigenous people. The experience that began this chapter occurred shortly after beginning work at her first position. Mathilde detailed:

I got hired right away and I was in the photocopy room, and I was in there with another teacher. And she started talking about people subbing, you know, and I was just working away and listening to her, not really saying much. And she said, “Oh wait, that’s right, you never subbed, you got your job cause you’re Métis.” (January 16, 2019)

Mathilde recounted this story on our first meeting together in her office. The next time we met, I inquired about this story once again. I asked what her response was. Mathilde told me that she replied by saying:

I was a little surprised by that, but also confident enough in who I was at that point because I was older. I was 34 then, and I just looked at her said, “I like to think that I got my job because I’m a good teacher, and the fact that I’m Métis is just an added bonus.” (January 24, 2019)

Our conversation about this story continued, and I wondered if her co-worker was attempting to be provocative with that statement. “I might’ve almost felt better about that, but I think it felt like it was

common, like it was just, like there was nothing wrong with saying that” (January 24, 2019). It was as though having the perspective that a person solely gained employment because of their heritage was acceptable and the narrative was normal. Our discussion shifted to what it means to “tick the box” when identifying as Métis on a job application. Mathilde explained that “When you tick that box, I think as a Métis person, you have to be more than willing to actually be a Métis teacher, and not just a teacher with Métis ancestry because those are two very different things” (January 16, 2019). We wondered about this particular process. Perhaps people encountered this in the past. Perhaps they had just ticked the identification box, and they never went beyond that in their self-identification as a Métis person. Mathilde did not feel as though her heritage was a box to be questioned, but rather it was something that people lived and life enacted. “There are people that actually have done that, so it makes it bad for people who really are [Métis]. You know if you tick the box, you better be able to live it” (January 24, 2019).

The photocopy room account led to a larger and perhaps more urgent discussion for teachers and those involved in the educational world (schools and universities). A discussion about the placement of new professional Indigenous teachers in non-Indigenous teaching placements, and the unusual pressures placed on them. Quite often new Indigenous teachers are employed in schools where they are the only Indigenous person. This could lead to burdensome situations where the rookie teacher is expected to provide teaching and lessons in new areas of Indigenous education at a school and community level where the teacher does not have the needed advice or supervision of how to do these lessons. These added duties without adequate support or advice create more stress for Indigenous teacher candidates or new teachers, and it is especially challenging if there are no other Indigenous staff to aid or talk through the process or confide in their own limitations. Mathilde shared:

I think as a young teacher, as a young person, you know cause we all get better with in terms of our feeling of confidence, so being brand new and already on that shaky ground of not knowing

if you're doing a good job right. And then have somebody say that to you. That to me is something that through the years, I think people... we lose good people like that. When we put them into environments without supports. To be able to navigate that right. If you're in there alone being... those things being said to you without the support then really you only have two choices you know. You either stay and, are, you know, walking on eggshells you know, not really sure of yourself, or you leave. (January 24, 2019)

Mathilde explained that because of this experience many excellent, young Indigenous teachers leave the profession. She said of new Indigenous teachers:

...they didn't have colleagues that understood their way of seeing the world I guess. And their way of doing things. So I think when your voice is always the minority, you don't feel supported. And your voice is not heard, valued maybe then you feel like you don't have the support, so I think you're losing people from those places because they were alone there. And sometimes in the places that they really needed to be, but you can't just put a Métis or a First Nations teacher in a building by themselves and expect that they're gonna carry the whole load for Indigenous education and you know they're just gonna thrive in a system that wasn't created for them. (January 31, 2019)

This was very much the scenario that Mathilde found herself in during her first teaching position, and because of the belief in herself and of who she was, plus the added life experience, this situation never evolved into a great concern for her. She continued to share that there was no further tension with this particular co-worker as they ended up sharing a classroom later in the year. I was interested in knowing if Mathilde would have addressed the situation differently today.

I would have taken the conversation further. This me, looking back on it, I would have taken that as an opportunity for you know say, "What would make you think I got my job because I'm

Métis? Like, where does that come from?” You know, I wouldn’t do it in like a mad-angry-challenging way, but in an inquisitive way. Because I think if by saying nothing... she said nothing, but by me maybe not challenging that more, she may have continued to think that she was justified in saying that. (January 24, 2019)

Creating dialogue and inviting an open and relational space to discuss these matters is an effective way to approach challenging conversations. Building relationships is vital to bridging differences and creating open and accepting spaces where learning is possible for all.

Threads

This section contains two strands that permeated the conversations that Mathilde and I exchanged. I will investigate the ideas of Métis identity and relationality. This investigation will also relate these ideas in correlation with the stories and moments that Mathilde shared.

Métis identity. Mathilde was cognizant of her Métis identity from a young age. She shared that her understanding and display of Métis values stemmed from her interactions with her grandmother. Her grandmother was welcoming person and always insisted that guests were offered food and drink when they arrived in her home. Mathilde shared that she recalled her grandmother speaking Michif in the home. Usually on the phone with relatives and friends. Mathilde’s grandmother also would teach some words in Michif to Mathilde while playing cards. These memories of her grandmother were foundational to Mathilde’s understanding of a Métis identity.

As a student, Mathilde felt her culture was invisible in school.

...it was almost like there was a separation between home and school. Right, like home was where your culture lives. School is school. And it didn’t, I always knew there was an absence, I didn’t see myself reflected in the learning, but it never struck as strange that people weren’t sharing that they were or weren’t Métis. (January 16, 2019)

It was not represented in the school structure itself or her teachers. Cultural invisibility (Mahon, 2006; Sun & Starosta, 2006; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) negatively affected Mathilde. “I remember being taught about Louis Riel and the only thing I was taught about him was that he was a traitor and that he was hung for treason. That what was the message given about my people” (January 16, 2019). Mathilde did not attend post secondary school immediately following high school, but rather spent time entering the work force in labourer and service type jobs. Her Métis identity was realized in an educational context when she began university as a mature student. It was in post secondary where she felt comfortable as a Métis student as she with others who shared similar backgrounds. The communal aspects and relational nature of the post secondary program she was enrolled in seemed to be a part of her career as a teacher.

Historically, the Métis lived in communal settings with the church being the centre of the community. These places included settlements along the Red River and the South Saskatchewan River. These communities were integral to the Métis people because they depended on each other for survival. The relational aspects extend beyond the settlements. Métis history is brimming with the need for relationship and community. “Living Métis communities have a historical continuity within the Métis Nation as it existed long before Canada colonized the West” (Gaudry, 2018). This stretches back to the fur trade where the Métis were the intermediaries between the European fur traders and the First Nations hunter and trappers. The fur trade depended on the strong relational skills of the Métis to bridge the differences between worldviews. “Métis emerged as powerful intermediaries between European settlers and First Nations and as an independent set of nations, whose role as traders and entrepreneurs fuelled North American trade and a new West in Canada”(Logan, 2015, p. 436). The fur trade was not the only area where relationship building and a strong sense of community was crucial to survival. The semi annual buffalo hunt was only made possible through the communal nature of the

Métis people because of relationships and the sense of community where people are looking out for each other and working together.

The story that Mathilde shared about her first teaching position and her coworkers comment about her hiring being based solely on her Métis ancestry was at odds with her relational nature. The Métis people valued hard work and earning what you deserve as evidence in the fur trade and buffalo hunt. These values permeate through the generations.

The assumption was that I only got hired because I was Métis. Not because I was a good teacher. But thankfully I had enough you know, I wasn't a shrinking violet by any means, so I just turned to her said, actually I like to think I got the job because I'm a good teacher and the fact that I'm Métis is just an added bonus. (January 16, 2019)

The comments made by Mathilde's coworkers were at odds with Mathilde's Métis worldview because in a setting with strong positive relationships there is an understanding of a person's worth and importance to the community. There are no assumptions that a person will be in a place where they do not belong.

Relationality. The inquiry into Mathilde's experiences revealed a significant occasion of teacher cultural insensitivity around meritocracy that she translated into her own resistance and self-assurance though it made her aware of the ways Métis are made to feel 'less than' whites. The cultural invisibility she experienced in school was also offset by her strong cultural upbringing provided by her family, particularly her grandmother. Mathilde always knew she was Métis and she identified cultural signifiers that were cultivated in her childhood. The strong cultural traditions and values that she experienced led her to be fiercely proud of her family and ancestry. The Métis culture is unique and distinct from other Indigenous cultures (Andersen, 2014 & RCAP, 1996). She often felt that the Métis culture was absent throughout her time as a student in elementary school up until high school. It was not until she returned

to university as a more mature student that she felt her culture was visible. Her time spent in at university, in a program intended for Métis people, was instrumental to her future, where she moved forward as a Métis teacher. Mathilde's experience, in her first teaching position, in that photocopy room that day could be viewed as a moment of liminality. Although she already felt strongly about herself as a teacher and a Métis person, this instance demonstrated the challenging situation that Indigenous teachers encounter in their teaching lives that is normalized as a white space. Mathilde responded to this situation by wanting to be the best possible teacher to prove that she was not only hired because of background, but because she was a quality person and teacher. She deserved and earned her position and she wanted to demonstrate her teaching talents.

From the beginning of her career, she was determined that the cultural invisibility she experienced as a student would not occur in her classroom. She valued an open and relational classroom above all else. Her words were echoed in Goulet and Goulet (2014), "I want students to have a strong sense of belonging in the class, so I do a number of activities to help them understand the concept of inclusion" (p. 116). Inclusion and relationality are the foundation for learning in Mathilde's classroom. "Without the development of a sense of community, I have no understanding of how to go into a class as a teacher" (Goulet & Goulet, 2014, p. 118). The sense of inclusion and relationality is important for students of all backgrounds, but it is even more important for students from marginalized groups.

I always believed that teaching is relational and I spend lots of time building that community, and therefore I look for the students in my classes like they're my kids right. How I would hope somebody would treat my kids or how, you know, would I. So that's how I looked at it. (January 16, 2019)

The cultural invisibility or Eurocentric education that Mathilde encountered is an example of the marginalization of the Métis people. We discussed the implications of how a non-relational teaching environment is challenging for young and new to the profession Indigenous teachers.

Kristian: That's why I asked that because I remember as a new teacher like you go into a new building and it seems everyone knows each other and you don't know if you're planning or teaching right. You don't know if the kids are gonna like you or how they feel about you or the rest of the staff, and then to have someone say something like that where it...

Mathilde: Shakes your confidence.

Kristian: Yeah where, "Oh you're not even, you only got this as..."

Mathilde: Just cause you're Métis, not cause you're a good teacher.

Kristian: For no other reason than that.

Mathilde: And so yeah I think as a young teacher, as a young person, you know cause we all get better with in terms of our feeling of confidence, so being brand new and already on that shaky ground of not knowing if you're doing a good job right. And then have somebody say that to you. That to me is something that through the years, I think people... we lose good people like that. When we put them into environments without supports. To be able to navigate that right. If you're in there alone being... those things being said to you without the support then then really you only have two choice you know. You either stay and are you know walking on eggshells you know, not really sure of yourself, or you leave.

Kristian: Yeah. Leave the profession.

Mathilde: Leave the profession. I think people leave the profession when they're in environments where their sense of belonging is challenged you know is affected negatively like that.

(Conversation, January 23, 2019)

By building and maintaining an inclusive and relational classroom, Mathilde is encouraging teacher acceptance, and providing the opportunity for students to build self-worth, both culturally and personally.

Schools that can function either as a whole or as a set of smaller teams to create a sense of community where adolescent students feel personally known, important, and encouraged to be active participants may have a more powerful impact than the influence of individual friends or cliques. (Goodenow & Grady, 1993. P. 69)

This results in educating students to be confident and compassionate people moving forward in life.

Building community, by being inclusive and open to relationship building is a component evident throughout the experiences that Mathilde shared during the inquiry. She spoke of her Métis grandmother always being a welcoming and generous host, and Mathilde explained how her experience in school as a child felt different because of a lack of inclusivity. She never saw herself represented in school, through either the staff or the curriculum. As a teacher, and later a principal, she valued the importance of relationship between students and staff. She shared an experience of when she was a principal and how at the beginning of the school year, the staff were deciding how they would like to be addressed by the students. The choices ranged from being addressed very informally, such as first names, to very formally. It was small decisions like this that create an environment of openness and acceptance. Allowing a choice. Mathilde explained:

How do we wanna operate as staff and how do we wanna interact with students and our families, so we had lots of good conversations about our beliefs and what we value before we even talked about how we would be called. And so I think when you start with values and those beliefs then it it's really easy to say we believe community and families is important. We believe

in you know, we value relationships. So all of those foundational beliefs and values then could easily be gone back to and say, okay, we believe this, we value this, what does that mean for how we interact and so to me the conversation was not a difficult one in terms of deciding what you were gonna be called because it was so personal. Everyone, not everybody had to do the same thing, that choice factor was what made things successful and there were some people that were you know quite comfortable with being called by their last name and wanted to be continued to be addressed that way. And that was good; they were more than welcome to do that. People wanted to try out new things you know, they said, "I'm think I'm gonna try being called by my first name you know. Not Mr. or Ms. anything, I'm just gonna be called by who I am. And so those people could do that. And then there were other people that said, "Yeah, I think I still want Ms. in front of my name, but I'm okay to use my first name and not my last name." Then there other people that said, "I would be okay with being addressed as like Ms. or Mrs. or aunty or uncle you know. And so people had a choice to do what they felt they were comfortable with, and they were able to work with their students to say, "Hey, this is what we've been doing as staff." And you know they were able to talk to their students by saying we started the year by talking about what we believe in and what we value and you know we're going to do the same thing here in our classrooms. (January 23, 2019)

Building relationships requires equal participation and involvement from all participants. This is so important when working with students and staff. Battistich and Hom (1997) wrote, "studies have shown that students who experience their school as a community enjoy school more, are more academically motivated, are absent less often, engage in less disruptive behavior, and have higher achievement than students who do not" (p. 1997). Schools need to be a place of acceptance for all people while maintaining a sense of community.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a narrative constructed from field notes taken during our conversations. I then shared a brief biography of Mathilde's life also constructed from stories from our conversations. Next, I unpacked the narrative that began the chapter by sharing dialogue that Mathilde and I exchanged. Afterwards, I described the strands of Métis identity and moments of Mathilde projecting her Métis identity and values through a relational pedagogy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NAVIGATING WHITEMUD: REFLECTION AND CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will delve into my thoughts and mindset when beginning the inquiry. It will then discuss the beginning of the inquiry with each participant. Next, the chapter will move onto considerations that arose from the conversations with each participant. The considerations will connect to my narrative beginning, and my initial wonders about Métis identity.

The Inquiry

Mathilde and Dorothy work in the same building and for the same program. I was once a student in this very program, although neither woman were employed there at the time. I made relational connections with these two Métis educators at different times. Dorothy is a known colleague and friend of my supervisor, so my supervisor introduced Dorothy and me. Dorothy and I had many things in common, and beginning a friendship with Dorothy came naturally. We exchanged emails, then we had phone conversations and afterwards we had our first face-to-face visit. We soon scheduled a day for our first meeting. I met Mathilde by coming to meet Dorothy at her office one day. I arrived to our meeting early, as I am prone to do, and was happy to see another friend of mine already there. My friend was in a room visiting with two women that I did not know. Both women were friendly and hospitable. Mathilde introduced herself and we talked about our family connections. She has the same last name as my maternal grandmother's maiden name. I visited with my friend and Mathilde for about two hours that day. Very early on into this meeting I realized that Mathilde would be wonderful a participant for my inquiry. Mathilde was selling these great Michif language posters and I asked to purchase one. After I purchased the poster, I asked Mathilde if she would be interested in being a participant for the inquiry. Thankfully, she agreed to participate and she seemed happy to do so. We soon scheduled a time for our first meeting.

My inquiry focused on two Métis educators and the role their cultural identity has been in their lives through early learning experiences, as well as their experiences as students in educational facilities, and finally as their experiences as educators in the classroom and administrative level.

My initial meeting with the two participants felt very comfortable and I felt at ease. We shared the background of Métis heritage. The relational nature of Métis people is something that I do not often feel living in the city, as pretty much all of my family lives elsewhere. There was a sense of welcoming and familiarity. We were able to understand each other's stories without many explanations. I felt very excited to begin the inquiry. Being in a building where I spent much of my time as an undergraduate student brought up some old feelings. I instantly felt nervous stepping into the building. I remember always feeling nervous when I was student here. I lacked confidence in many areas. First, I was not confident that I would make a good teacher. I was never a great student in elementary, junior high, and high school. School was challenging for me and I felt lost at the best of times. Although I love learning, it did not translate into being a successful student as a child. So being in this building brought up some feelings of inferiority. I have been teaching for over ten years and those feelings have vanished, but it is remarkable how I am able to remember. The other reason I was feeling nervous was that I never felt like I belonged in the program. I know I am Métis, but for some reason I never felt as "Métis" as my classmates. Mostly I have been confused on what it means to be Métis. I have often confused being Métis with a person's appearance. This confusion stems from general lack of understanding on what it means to be Métis.

There is a misconception that being Métis depends on the ethnic background of your ancestors. I grew up in a small city with many Indigenous people, and the lack of general knowledge about Métis people manifested itself through racism. I always felt too white, in the sense that I was not oppressed or discriminated against as other Métis people, to be Métis. The community in which I grew up projected this on to me. I was told by others steeped in racism that I am not Métis because my skin is white, or I

did not know what it means to be truly Métis because of my complexion. I carried this with me when I began my undergraduate degree. Franco and O'Brien (2017) shared their results in a study measuring the effects of an individual being denied their racial identity, "Our findings highlight the different dimensions of racial identity invalidation and indicate their negative associations with connectedness and psychological well-being" (p. 2). Being back in this building brought up the feeling of authenticity. Why do I not just assimilate if I am able to blend in as white? Well, that is not how I was raised. Growing up, we acknowledged and celebrated Métis culture within my family. My grandfather was proud and displayed the culture in his own quiet way. The culture was demonstrated through food, language, celebrations, and a way of living and knowing. Even though my family were proud Métis, it was not something that we displayed and projected outside of the home. My mother has even had feelings of shame and inferiority from her own experiences. All through my childhood, I knew my family was Métis, and at no point did we ever discuss how a person's skin colour could affect Métisness. A lack of understanding has brought out others' notions of what it means to be Métis. There is a need to recognize stories of all people. Johnston-Guerrero (2016) wrote of the importance of diverse stories and histories, "Not recognizing how these intersections and differential racializations marginalize certain students over others reinforces a racist and ethnocentrist notion that essentializes all that is not White" (p.47). This is what I believe now. I was not raised to think differently, but society had forced me to be either white or not. American scholar Edward Fergus (2017) shared the responses of Latino/a participants in a study on racialization:

The "Hispanic-looking" students, however, did not have to negotiate their skin color in the same manner. Instead, their skin color and other physical features were the basis for discrimination that their "white-looking" ethnic group members did not face. (p. 483)

I have felt this privilege of being "white-looking." I know that I am Métis but being in that building brought up these old feelings.

My meetings with the participants began at the beginning of January 2019 and would continue for the entire month. It was a very cold month. The meetings would take place after I was finished teaching for the day. I am still teaching full time at an elementary school. I would hurry over to the building to begin the recorded conversations. The conversations would usually last for about an hour, and the first meeting began with a set of questions about the participant's cultural self in relation to their experiences as students, teachers, and administrators. I brought along with me a notebook to record thoughts, notions, and questions during the conversations. After the meetings, I completed a reflection and wrote down questions for the next conversation. I composed the questions while being mindful of the three commonplaces of sociality, temporality, and place.

Dorothy's Narrative

After exchanging email messages and a phone call, Dorothy and I had our first in person meeting in the middle of December 2018. We briefly discussed the program and she was happy to learn that I am a graduate of the program as well. This transitioned into talks about the inquiry, and I explained the focus, and shared why I was asking her to be a participant. I presented the consent form and she read it over and signed immediately afterwards. She told me that I am doing important work, and she would be pleased to help. We decided that we would start the recorded conversations in early January 2019. I presented Dorothy with a copy of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™): The Path to First Nations Information Governance. Dorothy was familiar with the document as she had used it in a past research project.

Mathilde's Narrative

After my initial meeting with Mathilde, and asking her to participate in the inquiry, we exchanged emails and decided on a day to begin our conversations. I presented the consent form prior to our first meeting and Mathilde agreed to participate. I also presented Mathilde with a copy of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™): The Path to First Nations Information Governance,

but before I handed the document to her she pulled out in her own copy and she let me know that she was familiar with the document. Upon our first meeting, Mathilde's relational nature was evident as she quickly offered me a snack and something to drink.

My Experience From The Inquiry - Considerations

This inquiry began with the moment that I described in Chapter 1 of being in staff meeting sharing an article that I read about native ethics, in particular the ethics of non-interference. One section in particular drew reactions from my colleagues. This section is what began my wonder.

In Native society by contrast, such an attempt to exert pressure by advising, instructing, coercing or persuading is always considered bad form or bad behavior. The advisor is perceived to be "an interferer." His attempt to show that he knows more about a particular subject than the advisee would be seen as an attempt to establish dominance, however trivial, and he would be fastidiously avoided in future. (Brant, 1990, p. 535)

The reactions from my colleagues were a mixture of contempt, dismissal, and laughter as they were having trouble understanding how this idea could manifest itself in the classroom. It could also be that discussing Indigenous content brings forth a level of discomfort for them. It made me wonder if my lack of outward Indigenous projection made them perceive me as non-Indigenous and that this particular ethic was strange to me as well. In reality, when I read first this article, I connected to these ideas immediately. I understood the content, and I understood how the author was presenting the information. It was not foreign to me. The launching point of the inquiry was from this moment of feeling that my Indigeneity was called into question. It was not the article that I was inquiring into, but my feeling and experience that day in the staffroom. However, the world works in strange ways, and the article became a focal point for part of a conversation that I had with Dorothy, which also turned into a talking point with Mathilde. In Dorothy's role as a coordinator, the article came to attention in her

professional life, and she brought it up to me. We talked about how easily the article could be misunderstood and misused. I explained to Dorothy that:

...it really helped with my understanding of Aboriginal ways of thinking and approach to life. So the non-interference, it's so funny because I have a story that I was going to talk to you about that referenced this. Because I shared this article with my staff at school talking about the ethic of non-interference and how things could be more holistic in a classroom and in a school. Sometimes you don't always need to correct someone, tell them they're doing something wrong, sometimes you need to let people experience and fail on their own and learn from that. (January 23, 2019)

Especially if being presented by a non-Indigenous person, which was the case. Dorothy added:

And so you're working with these staffs, who don't understand any of this pedagogy, and they kinda make fun of it because they believe in that boot strap in meritocracy and why don't you people just get up in the morning and go get a job. (January 23, 2019)

Mathilde and I had similar conversation about the ethic of non-interference. We discussed that non-Indigenous people sometimes assume that this ethic means that Indigenous parents do not care about their children and that it is negligent.

I think it's the concept because it comes from a different worldview right. And it's not a worldview that they experience in and so... I think lots of times that's misconstrued by non-Indigenous people as... it's like with our parents, it goes to that same place, when you work in a school where you have non-indigenous teachers sometimes working with Indigenous students and their families, they don't always understand that idea of letting students make mistakes. Children, parents letting children make mistakes instead of trying to prevent because it's through that mistake that they learn something that stays with them way than if you would've

told them right. And so... I think that's exactly what might happen is that people take that as there's no parenting. (Mathilde, January 24, 2019)

Mathilde also spoke of the benefits of decision-making and failing on your own. In addition, how it builds character and self-esteem.

I think I'm pretty resilient because I was allowed to make all kinds of mistakes. And learn from them. There's like... I look at mistakes like, "I wonder what I'm suppose to learn from that?" Right. Instead of oh my god, how awful I am you know. (January 24, 2019)

I began to think more and more about the ethic of non-interference, the conversations I had with the two participants and what it meant in relation to the experiences they shared with my own experience and me. It also led me to think about my experiences teaching and working with Indigenous students. Quite often, I find that Indigenous students are use to being autonomous and seem to have a world awareness that I see lacking in non-Indigenous students. That is how I see the ethic of non-interference being a parent. I wondered why this is the case. I work in a city where most Indigenous people are not living a traditional lifestyle, where most students' parents have jobs, vehicles, and they live in houses in neighborhoods. Everyone seems to be living an urban lifestyle. So, why is the ethic of non-interference something that I feel is evident? I reflected back on this inquiry and the conversations I had with the participants. I also thought of what my own could mean to the ethic of non-interference. The participants' stories and experiences were as different from each other as they were my own. One thing did occur to me that affected all three of our lives and I think is a part of the experience for many Métis people. It could be a reason why the ethic of non-interference is still evident in people's lives. The reason is the economic circumstances that affect Métis people and how differently families respond to those obstacles.

Consideration - poverty. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) found that more Métis people on average live in poverty situations than non-Indigenous people do. This is not a broad stroke statement about all Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but is something to ponder and to consider.

Kristian: I was going to ask do you think that being Métis is tied with being poor? Was that kinda some of the...

Dorothy: We felt that indigenous people at the time were poor, that's for sure. We felt that our, that we weren't white that we weren't First Nation, but we knew didn't have very much you know.

(Taken from conversation, January 23, 2019)

The economic circumstances of Métis has many factors, but I do not wish to address those, but I would like discuss its effect on the life stories of the participants and myself. Mathilde shared "...my grandparents never owned anything their whole lives. They never owned anything. My dad and uncle eventually bought a house that they, my grandparents lived in. But they never did own anything" (January 15, 2019). Dorothy also said, "Some of the other families were experiencing poverty but not like, we were. We had destitute poverty" (January 8, 2019). I think of the necessity of education equity programs for Métis people. In addition, why those exist in the first place? Today it is common for Métis people to be educated and present on post secondary campuses, but that has not always been the case. For the participants and myself, we were first people from our families to attend post secondary. For the older Métis generation that was not always an option. Most had to work hard manual labour jobs with little or no skill requirements. I think of my own grandfather, and how he left school in grade 3, and he was illiterate. Mathilde concurred:

Yes, when you think about that generational piece, when you think about your grandpa, who has a Grade 3 education. And then there was the next generation, so your dad's generation, and you're dad's generation they probably got just a little bit better, and they worked really hard to support their family. So you're the first, like me, I'm the first generation that actually was afforded that opportunity to come to a place like university and to get a job like being a teacher, and so I feel, I've always felt a really heavy responsibility on my shoulders to make sure that the things that my ancestors did to get, to place me here right. I now have a responsibility to them to voice when I see those things because they didn't have the opportunity to be in those arenas right. I'm now here, and I have to say it. (January 31, 2019)

In many Métis families, both parents must work in order to survive. Both parents need to work because of a lack of higher education for previous generations. Métis scholar Louise Legare (1996) wrote, "Without an education and without any special rights to education, getting a post secondary education for people in my family was impossible" (p. 82). With little money coming into the household, and both parents having to work, who is going to care for the children? Speaking on racial identity development, Guillaume and Christman (2019) wrote, "Race is viewed as not having originated from biology, but rather society, with a prevalent economic component" (p.5). If you are lucky, there may be a relative nearby who can help, but that is not always the case. This result is children needing to contribute to the function of the household at a much younger age. Dorothy remembered:

My older brothers and sisters would help us and we would all help each other so we could let our mom rest because she did so much. Right? And the other families, their parents looked after them for everything, whereas we were looking after ourselves. I was cooking and sewing when I was five years old. And when I would share that with a classmate, they couldn't believe it. (January 8, 2019)

This might involve anything from chores to babysitting younger siblings. These conditions result in children being more autonomous at a younger age and having more responsibilities and the awareness and knowledge that goes along with it.

Kristian: When you were talking about, last time we met, you talked how you were like, when you were young, you were expected to make meals and clean house and things.

Dorothy: Yeah, we all had to look after ourselves.

Kristian: It got me thinking about my mom because that's how it was within her family too when she was growing up. It's like parents went to work, the older siblings had to take care of the younger siblings, and you had to get supper started and make sure the house was tidy and stuff like that.

Dorothy: It wasn't a parent thing that parents had to do that. We were taught as we got older that it was our turn to help out in the house. It was our turn. When my older brothers and sisters moved for work or wherever they were going, then it would be my turn, and when I left, my little brother's turn. My younger brother like.

Kristian: Was it explained to you like that? Now it's your turn. You knew it was your time.

Dorothy: No, it was just that we knew it was our time. I don't think anybody really told us, and my mom suffered a great deal. Like we drove her crazy. It was just her and she was suffering. She was trying to make to sure that we weren't going to be part of the 60s scoop. People were gonna come and take us you know.

(Taken from conversation, January 23, 2019)

The ethics of non-interference is not always a conscious decision in childcare for Métis people, but it sometimes born out of necessity. Children need to be more responsible at a younger age and are sometimes expected to more autonomous to complete those tasks.

Consideration – cleanliness. Perseverance from dire circumstances will affect how a person presents himself or herself. I think back to one of the conversations that Mathilde and I had about an experience she had as an administrator in an elementary school. The staff was working with elders to establish Métis values for their school. One of the elders insisted that cleanliness be one of the values included. Mathilde and her coworkers agreed that it was important, but did it warrant placement in the set of values?

Mathilde: Well she was a big stickler for cleanliness. Like things needed to be like neat and tidy and clean and other people said well yeah but is that really a value. Do we wanna take up a spoke on our wheel with cleanliness? And she felt very strongly about that.

Kristian: So did it end up?

Mathilde: Yep, it did. Yeah. Because there was a level of respect for knowledge. Because although people didn't necessarily see it as important, they also acknowledged that she had a different way of looking at things. And if it was that important to her, then it obviously must be a part of the Michif values.

Kristian: And why do you think that that was important to her?

Mathilde: I think because it... in her growing up and in her family and as it was in mine, that was a really big sort of source of... I don't know if it's pride, but a source of... like I think about my grandpa's house and how you could eat off of the patio blocks, and you could... I mean he would shovel the snow off the lawn for crying out loud.

Kristian: The reason why I ask this is because my grandpa always had to have a spotless vehicle wherever he went, and if he got a speck of whatever on it, he was at the car wash rinsing it off. So when I hear the tidiness and the cleanliness that's what it makes me think of and about how everything... clothing, vehicles, yard. Yeah, everything needed to be clean and tidy. I was wondering if she had reasons for that, like if that was part of the culture?

Mathilde: She said that it's a part of who we are as Métis people. And I agree with her, it is a part of who we are as Métis people. I think of... you know that whole idea of... you know my dad being you know he had to be impeccably dressed... you know his lawn looked like he had taken scissors and manicured it like giving it a haircut, like there was never snow on the driveway, there was never you know dirt, oil nothing like it was...

(Taken from conversation, January 24, 2019)

We discussed the implications of cleanliness to Métis values and identity, and our conversation brought back to the previous generations of Métis living in poverty, but always maintaining a clean and tidy presentation. Legare (1996) interviewed Métis participants in a research project, and one participant noted, "We were called dirty halfbreeds and I have to say, you know, my mom used to tell us all these things about keeping clean" (p. 76). The clean and tidy presentation was evident in clothing, a person's yard and their vehicle. The racism that previous generations faced may be one of the reasons for the value of cleanliness.

Kristian: And when she was talking about cleanliness and tidiness, was it... was she talking about how a person would present themselves?

Mathilde: Oh yes, definitely.

Kristian: Or was it more of just, "This room needs to clean?"

Mathilde: Physical surroundings and how a person presented themselves. So it wasn't just the you know dusting and the clean floor and all of that. It was also in how you present yourself.

Kristian: And why do you think there was that? An importance placed on your personal presentation?

Mathilde: I think it came from, I think it came from a place of always feeling kinda judged, and so that's what I believe. I believe it was important to our people to keep a nice clean... I think that is just value that we've always held, but I think it was also, you know maybe enhance by the need to feel like you have to prove to other people. Because when I think of sort of what my you know dad talked some of his experiences growing up and you know being called a "half breed or a dirty half breed" right. So that then would affect your wanting to make sure that you weren't that right. And so how do you refute that idea of "a dirty half breed," well you're neat, clean and presentable so nobody can... can refute that.

Kristian: So when you mentioned that last week about the cleanliness it got me making thinking about all these things about my own family. And conversation I had with this elder, and he said something along the lines of you know, "People look like they don't care and that's kinda the standard now, it's just..." What do you think of that?

Mathilde: Well I will tell that my... when I think about my dad, when I think about my grandma, like my grandma would not leave the house on a Saturday morning to go to you know pick something at the store unless she was... everything was perfect, she had her little jewelry on and she had you know she was dressed just right. In the house I guess she would wear her dress is what she called it. But she would never go out like that.

(Taken from conversation, January 31, 2019)

They did not want to face further prejudices for being Métis, so they made sure they looked their best and took pride and care in the few possessions they owned.

Conclusion

The presence of poverty in a person's life is considered in discussing Métis identity. The ethic of non-interference is sometimes an unconscious decision for Indigenous parents when raising children and it could be affected by racism. Parents being out of the house to work and the children being on their own without daycare or a babysitter could result in children who are more autonomous and strong willed. This could have effects on their behavior and performance in school. Poverty may factor in the Métis identity by the virtue of cleanliness and the importance of appearance when in public. A person living in poverty may take more pride in the few possessions they own, and they may place more emphasis on the things they can control such cleanliness. Métis have faced much discrimination and by having cleaning clothes, a shiny vehicle, and a beautiful yard, they may believe they can avoid further discrimination.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EXTRACTING WHITEMUD: DISCOVERIES AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Narrative inquiry helped me to understand the world of being Métis by recognizing that each life is unique and every person's experience is different. Being Métis means different things to different people, but what I learned from narrative inquiry is the appearance of some commonalities from the life experiences of the participants, Dorothy and Mathilde. These commonalities include issues of language and experiences as students. I described how the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model was utilized during several key moments of the inquiry. I finish this chapter with what I learned and found from the narrative inquiry, and further questions and wonders that I have.

Commonalities - Language

The participants expressed the loss of not being taught Michif even though their parents and grandparents spoke the language. I understand this circumstance because having gone through the narrative inquiry process I began reflecting on my experience and the history of my family. I knew of the Michif language, but always assumed that my grandparents just spoke French, but I had a recent conversation with a family member and it was revealed to me that my grandparents would speak Michif-French in the company of Métis people from their generation. The older Métis generation unfortunately, in many cases, did not pass the language onto the next generation. Knowledge of Michif and other Indigenous languages occupies a quarter of the leaves for sources of knowledge on the Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model. This demonstrates the importance of the language knowledge to the continuation of lifelong learning. This is an effect of colonization and assimilation, which many Métis may have experienced. We are now entering a phase for Métis people where language revitalization is of the utmost importance. There is a need for people to be trained to teach the language at all levels of

education (elementary, secondary, post-secondary). Through contacts I have made during this inquiry, I know first hand of the hard work that is being done to ensure that there is an infrastructure in place to revitalize Michif. It is not something that will happen overnight, but with the right leadership and passionate Métis people, there will be a positive future for the language.

Commonalities - Student Experiences

Another commonality that I noticed from this research is the cultural invisibility of the Métis culture in schools. Both participants described memories of their cultural selves being invisible in schools. According to the participants, home was where culture lived while school was a separate entity. I learned of the challenges Métis people face as students when their culture is not evident in school. A sense of shame and feelings of inferiority may develop. This is reminiscent of world traveling as described by Lugones (1987). The participants were Métis at home, but they were only seen as students at school. I see Métis culture becoming a more prominent part of the curriculum in the future in schools situated within the traditional homeland of the Métis. Teaching culture and teaching language go hand and hand. Once the Michif language is being taught in schools, then other aspects of the culture will be included as well. The participants shared feeling comfortable and themselves in an academic setting once they were in post-secondary. They attended the same teacher education program but at different times. Their classmates had similar life experiences as their own, and it was a space for Métis people to be themselves and feel their cultural selves recognized and celebrated. I was drawn back to Richardson (2006) and her explaining of “the third space” for Métis people. I can attest for this program being a “third space” for Métis people because I attended it as well, albeit at a different time, but I also felt the warmth and inclusiveness of the program. It is a place where Métis people can share their experiences in relation to one another and there is an openness and understanding of a shared cultural background. This idea made me think of Donald (2012) and the area of Métissage – the need for a place of shared history and understanding. The query that began this research project was my experience in being a

white skinned Métis person and the unsureness of my cultural self that ensued. Being Métis is not dependent on skin color. Appearance amongst Métis is diverse. Skin tone, hair color, and eye color for Métis people is broad spectrum. The confusion that some people may have about Métis people comes from a racist way of thinking. It could be an imperialist idea that if someone looks white, then he or she must not be Métis or Indigenous for that matter. I hope that this research will further deviate from that colonized and imperialist idea and reaffirm that one cannot assume that a person has assimilated based on their appearance.

Métis Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

The questions that initiated the conversations with the participants were derived from a section of the Métis HLLM. The learning ring guided the questions that I asked the participants. I began from the participants' cultural selves as children and continued the questions chronologically. From the learning model, follow up questions were based on the sources of knowledge of self, people, land, and languages. The considerations that I discussed in chapter seven stemmed from two of the roots on the learning model located in the Indigenous Knowledge and Values section. Poverty was in connection to the root of economic environment, while cleanliness touches several roots such as health care, balance and harmony, and physical environment.

What I Learned

From this research journey, I learned several things. I learned that the Métis culture is unique and diverse. I found the research methodology to be an excellent tool for discussing an individual's experience in the context of culture. This is how the uniqueness and diversity of Métis people's lives may be demonstrated. The uniqueness of the Métis culture is in their contrast to other cultures, while individual Métis lives and socialization are also diverse from one another. The participants, and myself, have had experiences where we needed to be assertive in stating that Métis culture was neither First Nations nor French. I was surprised when cleanliness was first brought up during a conversation with

Mathilde and it immediately made me think of my own experience and that brought up questions that I presented to the participants. Dorothy and Mathilde spoke of cleanliness at different times during the conversations. “Dirty half-breed” is a derogatory term that was mentioned by both participants, and it is a term that I have heard myself. The term perpetuates the racist discourse of Indigenous people being either savages or uncivilized. It was mentioned in Legare’s (1996) thesis on the experience Métis women as well. Underlying racism is the reason why cleanliness was discussed.

Future Wonders and Questions

I wonder about the effects of colonization on Métis and Indigenous people. Has the racialization of Métis people through colonialization created tensions that force Métis people to value cleanliness? Do these effects create anxiety and a nervous need to maintain a clean and presentable so as not to face judgments from non-Indigenous people? this nervousness and anxiety rooted in racism and not wanting to be perceived as inferior? I also found that Métis culture and identity is very strongly connected to the past. Métis signifiers of customs and traditions are things that are connected to the nineteenth century. These signifiers include clothing, song, dance, tools, and food. I wonder what Métis culture will embody in a modern context moving forward. Métis lives are diverse currently, but I want to know what commonalities Métis people share now and will share in the future.

I began this research journey wanting to learn about and better understand Métis culture. I had experienced aspects of Métis culture throughout my life, but I wanted a deeper comprehension to strengthen my knowledge. This narrative inquiry revealed characteristics of Métis identity and Métis identity formation that I did not anticipate. The participants and I came to understand our cultural selves because of events and occurrences that began in the eighteenth century and have since continued to unfold. These events and occurrences stem from the racialization of Métis people through colonization. The Métis way of life changed forever once Canada entered into Confederation and settlers began occupying land on the prairie in Western Canada. A settler society emerged where, in order to succeed,

Indigenous people were obligated to assimilate and were subjugated to capitalism and meritocracy by European settlers and the Canadian government. Those who were not compliant were subjected to distrust, diminishment, prejudice and eventual displacement from the settler society – this continues to the present. The Métis have always regarded themselves as having unique and distinct heritage and histories from First Nations and European settlers. Through colonialism, some Métis people have involuntarily, or voluntarily because of racism, assimilated or suffered the consequences of being Indigenous in a racist settler society. Those who are able to pass as white, and are able to thrive within the settler society, may have chosen to do so, hiding their cultural markers or ignoring them, while others have endured discrimination for their brown skin and Indigenous relations and culture.

Wanting to maintain cultural practices and heritage formed the cultural identities of the participants and myself. The by-product of being Métis in a racist society, however, has demonstratedly shown the damage racism has caused each of us and Métis in general. This narrative inquiry has contributed to disrupting the racist narratives that accompanies Métis people, and it strove to strengthen relationships and increase understanding amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The narrative of Métis people being neither fully First Nations nor European has led many to feel unsure of themselves in either community. The participants embraced the cultural lives of their relations and in so doing, wound up achieving a strong sense of belonging. I use the word 'belonging' in two ways. First, belonging means connected to an actual place, and, secondly, belonging means that their histories are included and acknowledged to these places as well. The participants shared stories of belonging in classrooms as children and adults. They also included stories of belonging as teachers and administrators. There are reasons for this sense belonging. For Dorothy, she had a teacher who liberated her in the classroom as a young girl. Mrs. Knight told Dorothy that her culture, her people, and her herself were not savages, and what they had been taught previously was inaccurate. Mathilde's experience of belonging as a student occurred later in her life when she attended university and felt at

home amongst her fellow Métis classmates in SUNTEP. SUNTEP has been a great source of creating equity for Métis people – not only the graduates but the lives they affect as well. In their roles as teachers and administrators, the participants facilitated and fostered a sense of belonging for the students and colleagues. The participants' experiences are stories of resiliency of being Métis and belonging when it is challenging to do so in the face of racism.

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Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:

Whitemud: A Narrative Inquiry Into the Life Experiences of Métis Educators

Researcher(s): Kristian Roy, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-966-7514, ktr916@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Marie Battiste, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-966-7576, marie.battiste@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

I am asking you join this research project leading to my master's thesis as you have self-identified as Métis, with years working in education. My research is aimed at examining the lives of Métis educators from which I hope to learn about how you have navigated your life as a Métis person and in what ways have that shaped your own education and your being an educator. I am particularly interested in how being Métis has influenced your thinking, your teaching, and hopefully, be able to understand how you have navigated your own identity and culture. Through listening and the telling and reliving of your stories, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of these experiences, your lessons learned and ways that that life could be valuable to other Métis, and non-Métis, people and educators.

The objectives of the research are to learn about and better understand the unique lives of Indigenous educators. My research question is how have culture and identity been key factors in your lived experience. This project uses narrative inquiry, which is a method to explore this query through shared storying and retelling. I hope that the research will reveal in my final thesis a better understanding of models of success for Indigenous people in academic settings. I also hope it will clarify and give examples of how one's experiences builds identity and how identity continues to be significant throughout your education and your life as an educator. This may reveal models of success for Indigenous students in the continuation of lifelong learning and could inform policy, programming, and curriculum on the education of Indigenous people. It will add to the breadth and diversity of Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers on Indigenous people.

Stories, and the retelling or rethinking the life lived through stories create the field texts or data for this study. The field texts are the foundation of the research texts, which will be used in the thesis.

The individual meetings will need to transpire over an adequate period to allow you and me to navigate the experiences shared. A time allotment of one to two hours over 3-4 sessions will be necessary, but may not fill the full extent of the allotted time.

Procedures:

The location of our meetings will be mutually agreed upon sites where comfort, privacy and quiet taping can be achieved in Saskatoon. These meetings are similar to an interview, during which you will share your experiences to prompt recollections and thoughts. I expect meeting three to four times will allow for further follow-up from previous sessions and clarifications during the inquiry. Meetings may last up to 1 to 1 and half hours per session. We will meet when it is most convenient for you. With your permission, the sessions will be audio recorded during the interview. You can have audio-recording turned off at any

time without giving a reason. You will be asked permission as to which stories you have shared may be permitted in the written thesis. I will be personally transcribing the recordings of the interview and sharing these with you to read at your leisure. You may change or delete or add text to these transcripts and decide what text of the stories will be used as field texts. You will also be given a copy of the project upon completion and you may keep your own transcripts if you choose. I will provide you a modest honorarium for your time. You may choose to be anonymous, meaning your name will not be revealed in the thesis and all identifiers removed or changed to protect your identity, or you may choose to have your actual name and identity disclosed. You may decide later in the project up to the time when the writing of the thesis begins.

Potential Risks:

This project is considered minimal risk. There may be a risk that memories may surface some sadness or discomfort if you recall and share difficult parts of your past, which could revive past trauma or cause stress or anxiety, but this risk for psychological harm is below minimal and cautionary at most. I will stop the interview if you display visible discomfort (sweating, shaking, stuttering). I will give time for you to recover and guide the conversation to other topics. If you are unable to recover, then I will reschedule the interview and offer support. There will be no legal or social repercussions, and there is no risk of physical harm or discomfort. You are not expected to share traumatic parts of their past, and will be encouraged to stop sharing if it is causing harm or discomfort.

Potential Benefits:

I believe the risk is worth the potential benefits. The minimal risk involved in this project could merit positive outcomes for Indigenous people in the strengthening and improving of educational practices which may improve positive life outcomes for Indigenous students and people. The research will increase

and enrich Indigenous research as a whole. The research will broaden the public's perception of Indigenous experience.

Compensation:

Compensation in accordance with Elder protocol and guidelines. This may be a gift (tobacco, sash or money).

Confidentiality:

In this study, I am using a narrative inquiry methodology, meaning that the researcher's and participants' stories about their lives in the study will be the data of the study. These stories both reveal one's life and are revealing in the retelling of how one understands those moments. The nature of stories involves times and places and people who are incidental to the research, need protection and whose identity may need to be hidden. So it is important that we decide together after the transcripts are made about how much of their lives can be told without compromising their identities. We will decide together how to hide their identity, by changing names, relations, or places to maintain the confidentiality. Your own identity may be known or may be secret or anonymous. You will indicate at the bottom of this consent form whether you wish to remain confidential in the publications. You may decide after the transcripts have been approved whether you want to remain anonymous or whether you are prepared to have your identity known throughout the thesis. You can request a change to your decision regarding your confidentiality by emailing the researcher. The deadline to request a change in confidentiality is January 1, 2019. My supervisor, Dr. Marie Battiste, will have access to the raw data. The raw data will include your personal identifiers and personal stories.

Storage of Data:

I will be conducting the data collection. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the original data of the study. The supervisor, Dr. Marie Battiste, be in charge of data storage that will be backed up on the University of Saskatchewan Cabinet. There will be audio recordings and written transcripts of said recordings. The data will remain with me during transportation from collection site. The audio recording will be kept on a password-protected computer, and the written transcripts will be secured in a locked file safe, which will be kept by my supervisor on the Cabinet backup system of the University. I will store the consent forms separately from the data to help safeguard the confidentiality of the data. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years, where after 5 years the audio recording will be deleted and the paper transcripts will be shredded. The data is intended for a thesis and journal article.

The OCAP principles, as detailed by Kovach (2009), of ownership and possession will be shared and discussed with you, and if there is any objection to access of data or the manner in which I intend to gather and store data, then that particular data will not be included in the project.

Right to Withdraw:

You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. The deadline for the withdrawal of the data is January 1, 2019. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position or how you will be treated. Should you wish to withdraw, any recorded or typed data will be destroyed or shredded

Follow up:

The research text is constructed collaboratively between researcher and participant, so you (participant) are involved throughout the research process.

Questions or Concerns:

Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free 1- 888- 966-2975.

Consent

Do you wish to have your name included in any publication stemming from your participation in this research? (Please check one response): Yes ☐ No ☐

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

APPENDIX B. TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Transcript Release Form

Date (), 2019

Dear Dialogue Participant,

Thank you very much for participating in the conversation about your experiences as a Métis educator.

Please find attached to this email/letter the transcription of our dialogue conducted on (), 2018. The interview has been transcribed verbatim. It includes everyone in the dialogue's contributions. You may choose to read or not read the transcripts. If you choose not to read, I will use them as they are.

____I do not want to review the transcripts.

____I will review the transcripts and have them back by date_____

____If the transcripts are not returned by (), 2019, you may assume that the transcripts are approved.

For future publications and presentations, *all identifying information on the transcript will be removed*. Only the name you have selected will be used, or you may use your own name in the book. There are no known risks. You may decide now how much of your *personal identity will be protected*.

_____ I agree to use my own name in the book as _____

_____ I prefer to use a pseudonym chosen by me. Name _____

_____ I would agree to allow the book editors to choose a name for me.

Please let me know if there is anything you would like to add, omit, or change in regards to your responses and interventions at the dialogue. After you read the transcripts, please correct on the hard copy and I will input them in the final dialogue document with everyone's edits included, or you can correct on a word processor and select track changes so that I can see what changes were made.

_____ I will track change my suggestions. Should you choose to make changes electronically, please email the transcript with any changes highlighted or tracked with the track change in the word program.

____I will manually enter my changes on the paper transcripts. Please contact Marie Battiste by email (marie.battiste@usak.ca) or phone (306-966-7576) to make arrangements for pick up of the transcript.

In case that we do not receive a response from you by **(DATE)**, we will assume that you are satisfied with this transcript, and the research team will proceed with the analysis for this study. I will call you to ensure that you do not need more time to complete the transcription review.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Kristian Roy 306-381-3725 if you have any questions about this process or need a pickup of the material or if you are having difficulty sending it back by email. Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this inquiry about the identity of Métis educators.

With Respect,

Marie Battiste

Marie.battiste@usask.ca

306-966-7576

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW CONSERVATION STARTERS

1. Early learning experiences. Was there an understanding of a Métis identity? How would you describe the community where you grew up? Try to think of specific memories.
2. Think about cultural learnings, at home and the community where you grew up. What are your recollections?
3. Experiences in school as a Métis student. (elementary, high school) Describe the schools and how your memories as a student. Did you see yourself represented in the school? Were you able to identify with the teachers? Think of any specific memories.
4. Experiences in university as Métis . Did you see yourself represented in the faculty, student populations, or buildings/structures? Any distinct impressions?
5. Experiences post-university. (job searching, schools, staff relations, admin relations) Was there an expectation to identity as Métis /Aboriginal as a teacher? Were there any challenges in gaining employment? If possible, describe any instances.
6. Have you encountered situations where there was a need to “pass” either as First Nations or white. If so, what were the challenges and how did you navigate the situation? If there was a need to pass, what was the cause of it?